

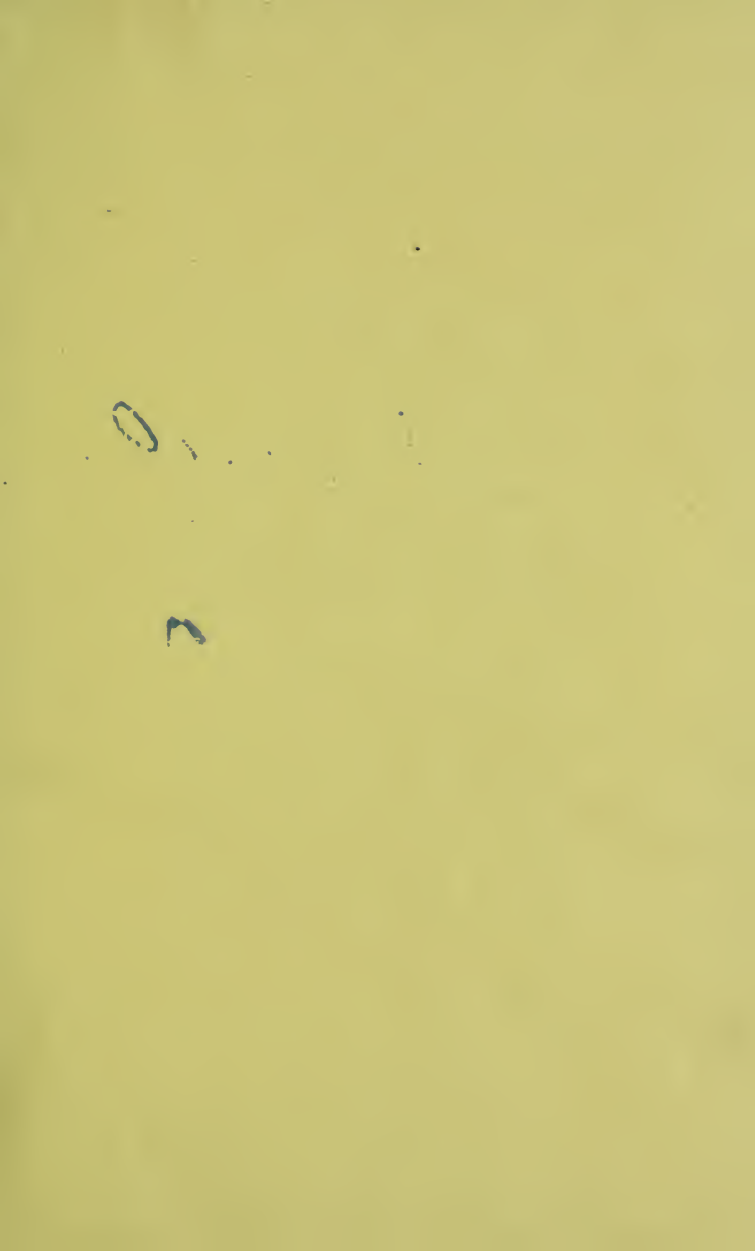
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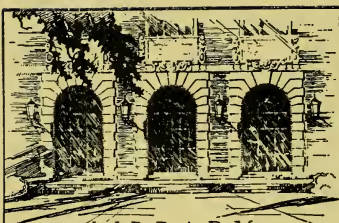
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DR SINCLAIR'S SISTER

BY

EDWARD GREY

(Author of "Concealed for Thirty Years")

IN THREE VOLS

VOL III

LONDON

EDEN, REMINGTON & CO PUBLISHERS
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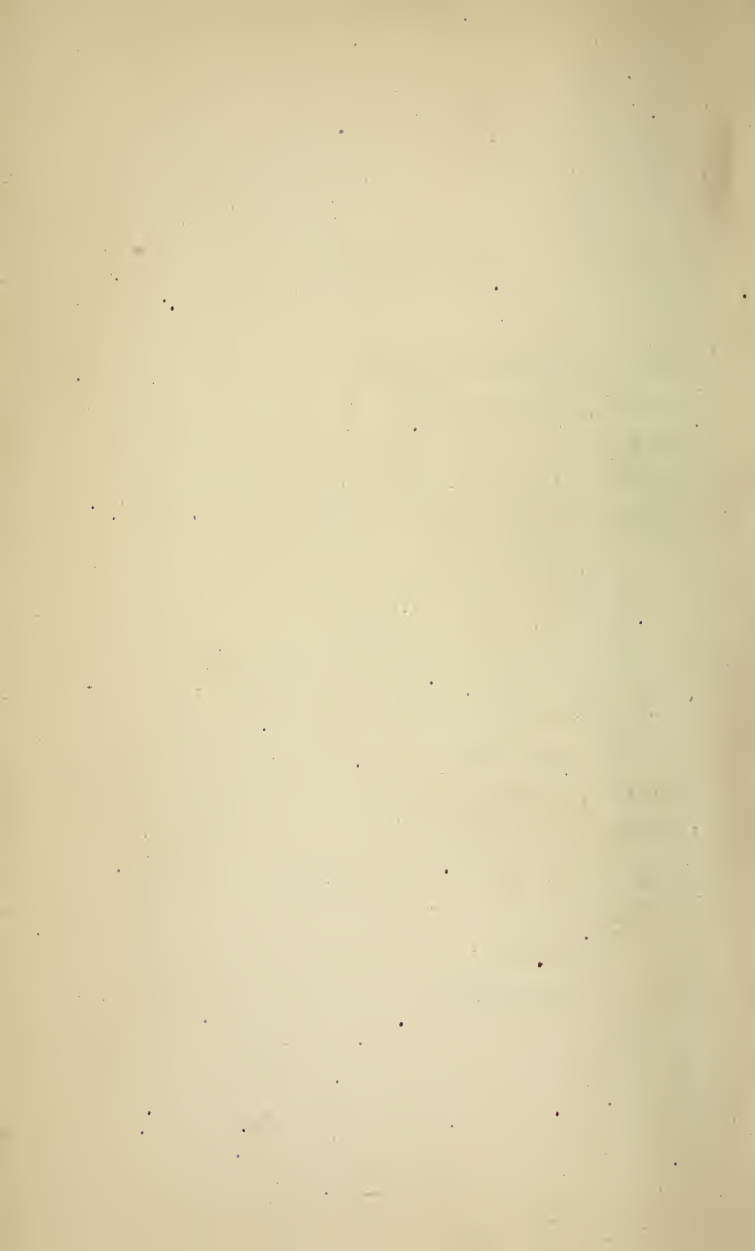
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CHAPTER XXXV.

THE NEW FRIENDSHIP.

POSSIBLY,—if it had not been for Claire's illness, the new Rector of Abbeyslea's intimacy with her and her brother would not have become so cemented, and have ultimately led to such results.

Possibly, — if the mistake Claire still declared she had made, in allowing herself to be duped by Lambert, had not been made, what came rapidly—as a new interest to her and her brother,—might have taken months, even years, to have come about.

Possibly,—if Marcus Sinclair had not—as it were—been delicately, yet forcibly, drawn into friendship with a Christian man, whose strength and nobleness of character had the effect of influencing all those with whom he came in contact,—either more or less,

according to the mobility of the nature,—Sinclair might still have gone on putting off, what he inwardly wished, and yet with false shame—avoided.

And, finally, possibly—nay, assuredly,—*man's* ordering of events would not have proved so effectual for working on towards the high aim and object of *man's* being, as *God's* did.

Did Claire really regret the prostration of mind and body, which for a time laid her low? Did she really grudge the hours spent in dreamy thought when, all the while, the pause given in life, was helping to change and form her character? Did she wish again for the innocent, girlish notions and desires, which had a short time ago been hers,—when she might revel now in the purest and highest of woman's hopes, and know that there may grow a friendship closer than a brother's, and an ideal worship and loyalty, before which that given to a brother, is valued only as silver unto gold?

During the course of Claire's absence at Islay Court, Marcus Sinclair had once met, and conversed with, Ambrose Liddon. It

could scarcely be said that the former had sought, as he had on one other occasion, the society of the new Rector ; for, so occupied and so troubled had he been about Claire's unnatural silence, that he had,—except for his professional visits, — kept himself as secluded as he could. But, on the very morning of the day that he had left for Ironbridge, he had accidentally come across the man, whose life—in a human point of view—was far more lonely than his own, and whose grievance—had the priest of God for a moment regarded it in that light—was of far greater magnitude, than was his.

It was on Dr. Sinclair's way to the Midland Station, that he was met by Ambrose Liddon. The former was hurrying along with his rapid strides and lowered head, not heeding who he passed, or who passed him. He had given himself more than ample time, in which to catch the afternoon train to M—; but, notwithstanding this precaution, haste seemed necessary to the state of worry and anxiety in which he was. The mask, which so often hid the real feeling and expression of his face, had been forgotten ;

and Dr. Sinclair, both by his attitude and bearing, showed something of the trouble he was in.

There are some men and some women, who outwardly and inwardly seem to prefer not having sympathy shown them. Whether this feeling is genuine, whether in everything that affects them they would actually prefer no one ever noticing, or taking any heed of them and their troubles,—it is hard to understand. Sometimes, one comes across those who, most loud in their expressed antipathies upon this point, yet in the time of even petty vexations and troubles, are first to exclaim upon the coldness and lack of sympathy of the world.

In the case of Dr. Sinclair, he was one of those men who said outwardly—"Blessed is he who expecteth nothing, for then will he not suffer disappointment"—but, inwardly, he was always hungering after the sympathy he so seldom got, except—of late months—from his sister. Even as he hurried along that day to the station on his way to Iron-dridge, he was ruffling and magnifying his trouble by the thoughts of his isolation from everyone.

But, with one man who had now come to live in Abbeyslea, at least, this inward craving might be done away, and this outward phrase become as nought. For, the new Rector of Abbeyslea had sympathy for everyone; and though he scrupled not, where matters lay wrong, to condemn and—as far as in his province lay—to set them right, still—the delicacy of his feeling and the strong reality of his co-feeling, was making itself everywhere felt.

It was characteristic of Ambrose Liddon, in the very first words he spoke to Dr. Sinclair, to come straight to the point. He saw, as the rapidly-striding figure had advanced towards him, that the tread and attitude of the man, betokened anxiety,—trouble,—disquietude.

“You are in trouble,”—he had said, laying his hand on Sinclair’s arm, and speaking in the voice that so peculiarly invited confidence,—“can I help you in any way?”

Sinclair had looked at him from beneath his heavy brows, for a moment, in silence; then, with a sudden break through of reserve, he had seized the Rector’s hand in his own, and said,

"I *am* in trouble,—great trouble ;—but I am a man who lives alone in thought,—scorning sympathy,—hating kindness. Why . . ."

"Stay,—"—the Rector had broke gravely in with, still letting his hand rest in the other's grasp,—“you are not the man to say this. I should have thought,”—bending his eyes steadily upon him,—“that you were a man who, less than many, could live without sympathy or kindness, and a man whose soul would die if left alone. But—”

He paused, struck by the intense gloom in the other's eyes.

Sinclair drew his hand quickly from his.

"My soul is dead,"—he said bitterly, half turning his head away,—“but I have one love, one care in this world, and that is for my—sister. And I am in great,—aye, great trouble about her,—she is not with me,—I have not heard from her, and . . .”

He was speaking to an entire stranger ; yet, he was telling more than he would have, to his most intimate friend in Abbeyslea.

"Your one,—your *only* one?"—said the Rector in a voice, which restrained emotion made very low,—“have you no other tie?"

“None,”—said the other harshly,—then, as if recollecting himself, he added with more gentleness,—“No; I have no one else,—but, I am content,—happy with this only one.”

As he was speaking, he saw a shudder pass through the Rector’s spare figure, and his strong, pale face grow paler; while the blue veins, marking his temples, rose.

“You are richer than I,”—said the man of God brokenly, looking beyond Sinclair, away at the cloudy sky,—“I had but one,—the dearest, the best,—but God has taken her—just now. It is—it is for the best,—He knew,—I did not. Still—”

He took the hand which Sinclair, with ready sympathy and feeling, extended to him.

“Still,”—he repeated, with a smile gradually overspreading his face, sweetening its whole expression and lightening the eyes that had grown dim,—“I must not burden you with my trouble, when you have your own; only—in a way—our one tie, our one affection seemed to bring us nearer, and so—I touched upon it. Good-day, I must not delay you, but—as your friend and brother, I wish with all my heart, that you will find it better than

you expect,—that it will be well with her—and yourself. You will be returning in a day, or two?”

“As soon as possible,—as soon as possible,”—muttered Sinclair, moving forward,—“but the journey is long, and I do not know what . . .”

The Rector took two strides after him.

“It all lies in God’s Hands,”—he said, in low yet emphatic tones,—“whatever little you may attribute to His Power, and whatever little trust you may place in His Wisdom,—it matters not,—for, the fact remains that *all* is under His Ordering, *all* is subject to His Will. The creature must bow to the Creator.”

“I have no belief and no knowledge,”—said the young doctor, hurrying on,—“yet I would, aye”—breathing heavily and looking back at the man of God,—“*I would* I had a living belief, and a living knowledge.”

This short conversation, that had passed between the two men, recurred again and again to Dr. Sinclair, during his journey to Ironbridge. It served in a way to relieve his thoughts from continual conjecture, upon

what might be happening to Claire. The few words interchanged served, also, to stir the embers, which lay—to all appearance—entirely dead within the soul of Sinclair. He tried to force himself to think, upon what he had, for years, refused to think. He tried to say the Rector's words over to himself, and to see that in them lay a faith and a trust, which had the power of relieving life of some of its vast individual burdens. But—alas!—the soul that had wilfully shut out God, had shrunk and shrivelled. It had become numbed by neglect. It had been allowed to lie fallow, and thus its boundless capacity had become limited.

“The creature must bow to the Creator,—the fact remains,—all is under His Ordering, all is subject to His Will.” How could Marcus Sinclair understand these words? How could he repeat them over and over again to himself, and find in them anything but a meaningless refrain—anything but a forced theory? For, as it has been powerfully said—“The religious faculty is a talent, the most splendid and sacred talent we possess . . . yet, it is subject to natural

conditions and laws." If a man take his talent, and hide it in a napkin,—it remains *not* as it was at first. The value and capacity of it lessen ; and, after fair trial, the talent is taken from that possessor and neglecter of it. Marcus Sinclair's greatest talent had not been taken from him ; but wrapped in its napkin with neither air nor space in which to grow, it had shrunk and numbed, till its old power and property seemed gone from it. It would need more than a few passing words, to lastingly quicken what had been so long neglected. The " capacity for God," and the straining after the possession of this capacity, could not be the work of a few moments.

—Ambrose Liddon had allowed three or four days to pass, before he had called at Dr. Sinclair's house, to inquire both for him and his sister. He called during the evening time, hoping thus—if Dr. Sinclair had returned to Abbeyslea—to find him in. And, he was fortunate ; for, the doctor had returned, and both he and his sister were at home.

As the Rector crossed the small hall, following the steps of Jock,—he breathed

a prayer. The difficulty and responsibility of the position in which he would be, when once again face to face with Dr. Sinclair,—was not a thing that struck him only at that moment ; but, was a matter that he had been considering, since Sinclair's bitter announcement of "his no belief and his no knowledge," yet of his desire to possess both. The first half of this announcement had shown—as he had known before—this man's atheistical tendencies ; but the second half had—in a way—repudiated the extent and the deep-rooted evil, of the first.

Still, Ambrose Liddon knew something of the mutability of human nature. He had not lived and worked amongst men, and not learnt that the wish of to-day, even in matters of vital importance,—is not always the wish of the morrow. He had seen by the dark, changeable face of the young doctor, and by his gloomy eyes and heavy, contracting brows,—that he was a man of many imaginations, many desires, many emotions. He could see that pride and excessive reserve, had proved and were

proving—if not lessened—his bane through life; that these were the properties through which he would have to make way, before he could get at the true heart and soul of the man. But he could not help feeling a peculiar interest in, and regard for, his new acquaintance; an interest in especially, because he was a brother trembling upon the edge of a bottomless abyss; and a regard for, because he was a man more honest and sincere with himself, than most.

Little as he had seen of Sinclair, he had still been able to feel, that he was not a man content with himself and his own doings,—not a man living in the much-loved atmosphere of torpor and inertia. This was the atmosphere, that Ambrose Liddon most dreaded. Too many, he discovered, surrounded by it; too many he found living in its living death, unable—literally unable, to break through it. And thus it was, rather with the prayer of hope, than of despair, that he had been petitioning to his God on high, for Marcus Sinclair and for himself in connection with him.

It was still in this spirit that he had found himself, entering Dr. Sinclair's house.

To a man of Ambrose Liddon's tastes and inclinations, the comfortably furnished drawing-room of the Sinclairs into which he was shown, with its bright fire and shaded lights,—presented a pleasant and homely appearance, such as he loved to see; and such as he had loved, at times, to feel and enjoy, when his mother had been living, and had taken pride, in making all bright and pleasant for her son.

There had been complete silence when he was shown into the room. Yet, it was with no sign of surprise that Dr. Sinclair had arisen at his announcement, and come forward to meet him. By subtle instinct, Ambrose Liddon had felt that he was expected; that, by that curious nearness of thought, which sometimes exists between, little less than, strangers,—Sinclair's had, just then, not been far from him.

The young doctor had been the first to speak, in a low, hurried undertone; as, with quick steps, he met the Rector, before he had advanced far into the room.

“I have her with me again,” he had said, “it is all well—well, in a way,—well as it can be,—as I could expect it to be. But it

was a great mistake,—a great shock to her,—she will have to lie and rest for days to come.”

Ambrose Liddon knew nothing further even now, than what he had gathered from the few disjointed sentences, concerning his sister, which Sinclair had let drop, when he had met him on the way to the station. But with his delicacy of thought and feeling, he did not inquire into particulars of what was meant. A hearty grasp of the hand and some low deep-felt words of sincerest sympathy and pleasure that the journey had not been a fruitless one,—was all. Then,—on a sign from Sinclair, he had drawn near to the couch, on which Claire lay.

Probably, Dr. Sinclair thought, that to arouse her from her own thoughts and back memories, would be the best thing for her. For, during those first days, she would lie for hours, with her large eyes wide open, and the usually smooth brow, from time to time, painfully contracted. She spoke seldom, and seemed to notice little of what passed around her. Thus, it had been with some anxiety that, each evening, he had sat by watching her.

But this time, Claire had already been aroused. The sound of Jock's voice, pronouncing Rev. Liddon's name, had suddenly brought her thoughts back, not only to the present, but also to that time which had come just before that week spent at Islay Court. That time before, when she had so often found herself thinking of the new Rector,—picturing to herself his strong, good face,—wondering what he would say or think about this, or that,—and longing,—longing always for the time to come, when she should know him to speak to,—when she could listen to him, and ask him to teach her how to become a good and noble woman, with the same high motive for living that he had once, before many people, declared to be the *one* laudable motive.

His coming to Abbeyslea had, more than anything else, she knew, broken down her ideal worship of, and faith in, Marc. There was something so much stronger, so much higher, so much grander,—she thought,—in the life and the work of the priest of God, than there was in her brother's life,—not merely in the profession, she did not mean,

but in the way and in the motive of living. How could she still regard the one as perfect, when there had come another,—whom she could only view distantly,—and yet, could see was far more perfect? How could she be content with the one standard, and the one way of living and thinking,—when she had been allowed to have a glimpse into another higher standard, and another nobler life?

Thus it was, though her brother knew it not, that in that evening call of the Rector's, the very best thing had happened, that would serve to arouse Claire from the kind of light stupor, in which she lay. It was only a few moments that Ambrose Liddon stayed, only a few words that he spoke,—but the spell was broken. From that hour, she returned—as it were—to the present life again. What had passed, became to her the Past; though a Past to be still dwelt on, because—as yet she had not woven together what had taken place. Not that there was any pleasure, in still continuing to bring back to her mind, the unpleasant circumstances attending those days spent at Islay Court, but that there was a certain sense of satisfaction, in recall-

ing correctly, once for all,—and then, if possible, to leave it alone, and forget it for ever.

Long after the Rector had left, there remained a half-smile on Claire's pale face; as with closed eyes and parted lips, she lay on the couch before the fire, with Marc close by, watching her. He thought she slept, and rejoiced at the light, natural sleep, which so seldom came to her. But it was not sleep; it was, rather, the rest of quieting and happy thoughts, which was perhaps as good for her, just then, as sleep.

And Marcus Sinclair himself, as he leant his head on his hand, shading his eyes as he did so,—gave himself up to thought.

As Ambrose Liddon had anticipated, there had been a studied avoidance on the part of Sinclair, even during the time they conversed alone together in the hall, of the subject they both of them had most at heart. It was the Rector himself who—before quitting—laid his hand on the doctor's arm; and, in a few courteous though strong words, referred gravely to his own position as priest of God and therefore his responsibility for the care and guardianship of the souls of all

those, who lived in his Parish. In the same breath, he passed on to say,—not hardly, but with a certain clear reasoning,—that where disloyalty to the Church, and injury to her spread and influence was apparent, it was his duty to speak out. boldly and as far as in him lay possible, to strive with God's help, to point out the wrong, and to give the helping hand, necessary for the restoration of right.

Strangely,—Marcus Sinclair did not take what the new Rector said, amiss. If it had been a man with less tact, less delicacy, or less power, his pride would have arisen, and he would either have kept a scornful silence, or given back a bitter, sceptical answer. As it was, however, his reply—though rather enigmatical to Ambrose Liddon, — yet showed no resentment. All he said was :

“ You are what I said, by the look of you, you were, on the very first day I saw you, in the church porch,—a *man* ;—and I respect and admire you for all that you do say. You are true to the principles you profess, which cannot be said of nine-tenths of the people in the world. But you and I are separate,—

we walk on different paths,—yours is a higher and more satisfactory one than mine, but I can't change,—I can't alter. We must remain, in certain points, entirely at variance. Still . . . ”

At this juncture, he had hesitated, as if doubting the wisdom of what he was going to say.

“ Still— ? ” the Rector had repeated, fixing his steady eyes on his companion's dark face, and noting, as he did so, its splendid possibilities.

“ We can still, . . . notwithstanding this . . . be friends ? ” questioned Sinclair weakly, knowing that, speaking as he was to a man of Liddon's nature, he was trying to enforce a fallacy.

The Rector's negative answer was strong and decided.

“ No, ”—he had said,—“ an outer friendship is nothing, and an inner—such as you would propose and I would heartily second—means heart to heart and soul to soul. With this there can be no two paths, on which to walk. ‘ How can two walk together unless they be agreed ? ’ ”

"In one point differing only?" muttered Sinclair grudgingly.

"But that point is the point of our whole lives," returned the priest of God with power, lifting his face as he spoke. "To believe or not to believe is life or death to me,—and life or death to you. The two cannot, differing on this one point, be as brothers or friends together,—they must be separated by a wide and awful chasm, down which the one looks, and from which the other flees."

A flash of light crossed his face, giving it the look that is so often seen, in the pictures of saints' faces.

Sinclair noticed it, and drew a step nearer.

"You are happy,—satisfied,—life is sweet to you?" he said jealously, his face looking darker and more restless by contrast with the other's,—then, fiercely he added—"Good Heavens!—if you have the power, give me, what you have got."

"God has the power, not me," said the priest in low tones, "and He is Omnipotent,—therefore, all things are possible to Him."

His coat was already on, and his hat in his hand.

“You will come again,—soon?” said Sinclair, opening the door for him.

And the Rector had promised.

Thus, the acquaintanceship between the Sinclairs and the new Rector of Abbeyslea, grew.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MUSIC AND WIND.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon, of the day before Christmas Eve.

All the morning, the clouds had lain low and leaden in the skies, with scarcely a breeze stirring the warm, unwinterly air. But, towards midday, certain sharp gusts of wind came, at intervals, sweeping round the houses; and, now and again, the creaking of the tree boughs, and the flutter of the few stray, clinging leaves, seemed to portend the rising of a storm. After that, as each hour went by, the gusts became longer and louder, the bending and creaking of the boughs came oftener, and there could be no doubt that, after days of quiet, unhealthy, summer-like warmth, there was going to come a great change.

Franz Humbert roamed restlessly about in his music-room. Like most sensitive, high-

strung people, the state of the weather would have its play upon him. The fitful sounds from outside, the moaning in the boughs, the rustling of the dead, papery leaves along the ground—some straying close up the narrow, gravel path, leading past his window,—and the more than ordinary darkness of the hour, seemed to act as a kind of fire upon his variable spirits.

“What?”—cried he, with his usual custom of speaking aloud his thoughts, and tripping to the window, after a prolonged and noisy search for some missing sheet of music, in one of the corners of the room,—“is night with all its nightliness already coming on? Alas!—one,—two,—three,—six hours of forced, unnatural light, with——ah——!”

He broke his sentence short with a prolonged exclamation; and, as he did so, threw up his hands and tossed back his yellow hair, with signs of surprise and admiration.

The clouds, which he had not cared to look out upon before, had broken up from their low, leaden mass, and were rolling in great, black volumes over the sky. The sky hidden for so long, appeared in between the rolling

volumes, not dark and colourless as so often it appears in winter time about this hour, but brilliant in its blueness. There were only patches of it to be seen, just here and there, as the black clouds, made distant at times by the over-capping greyer ones, drove hard onward, as in battle.

And as the violinist's face brightened, while he gazed at the grandeur of the moving Heavens, round swept the rising wind with a stormier, stronger gust, and in a kind of momentary fury, bore straight against the high French windows,—lightly fastened,—near to which the dreamer stood. Its strength, puny as it was to what it would become,—was sufficient;—the fastening gave before the angry push, and both windows flew open.

“Ah!—it's gaining strength!” cried Franz half in glee, as—instead of readjusting the fastening,—he stepped lightly outside, and let the lingering gust blow through his long hair, and beat upon his uplifted face, “there will be music and mirth ere long, with wild zephyr playing in this strain. Good,—we will have company—rare com-

pany, which—which will move us more than any other.”

The clouds rolled heavily; yet swiftly on; the wind sank,—sank, as it does, while it stays to gather strength to rise again in a stronger blast, which again gives place, each time it pauses, to still stronger, fiercer ones; at length to become so fierce and prolonged, that the intervals of false peace, are but rare and far-between.

“Sweet,—sweet and soft;—it brings no winter yet,” murmured the violinist, pacing—hatless—up and down his narrow path, with now but a gentle air stirring round him, “if it rise even to high storm, it will be pleasant still, thus warm and westerly;—I would though . . .”

All warm and westerly,—yet strong, with a warm embrace! He had stepped further on, past the front of his house, to where the wind came driving round with no impediment to stop its way; and it caught the unsophisticated dreamer, caught him and bore him back breathless,—panting,—angry, with his hair clinging round his eyes, and his coat flapping open.

“ Still warm,—but fighting me like fury ! ” he exclaimed in aggrieved tones, readjusting himself, and taking refuge again in his music-room, but not yet closing the windows after him. “ What will it be at midnight ? I will sit up for it, ”—his eyes gleaming with pleasure, and his whole face lighting,—“ aye—and play to its accompaniment,—nothing so free or wild, nothing so weird or—or terrible ! Ah !—my brother,—what have we before us ? ”

Regardless of the rustling leaves, that were being driven up the one stone step, in through the open window, or of the stray sheets of music that fluttered about in untidy confusion to meet them,—Franz Humbert threaded his way, in between his many musical instruments, to the extreme end of his rhomboid-shaped room.

“ Two days,—two whole days, ” he muttered, half-remorsefully, “ yet—it’s not my fault. The child,—my fairy—has gone a long time now, and I do not seem to care all entirely, as I once did. ”

But he stooped with the same old care and reverence, to draw his best-beloved instrument, from its case.

“Am I disloyal, my brother?” he asked, half-mournfully, his face twitching, and the great lids drooping heavily over his eyes,—as slowly he moved back to the lightest part, of the fast-darkening room, “two days,—and once before now, one whole week,—ah!—but that was the week after,—just after, they took her away.”

Without attending to what he was doing, so intent was he thinking of the departure and loss in his life of his child pupil,—he raised his violin, all untuned to his shoulder. It was only a single double note, in which he meant to express his thought, but alas!—that which was to have been as sympathy by its expression,—proved its very opposite. The note struck harsh and tuneless, on his ear.

With a jerk of his arm, and an angry exclamation at his own forgetfulness, he brought down bow and instrument, on to a table, near to which he was standing.

“Hateful darkness!” he exclaimed fretfully, hastening to the mantelpiece, in search of matches, “everything’s wrong,—why couldn’t he do, as I wished him to? It was all . . .”

He had found the matches, and with the

same exquisite oblivion of all natural consequences, which characterized his every movement and design,—attempted to light up the room, with a lusty, westerly gale blowing in at the wide-opened windows.

After several fruitless efforts, after which he waxed more and more impatient,—a louder creaking from the trees outside, and a stormier blast blowing inside, brought him again to the window, with a sudden idea of the possible cause of his failure. With haste, he attempted to close the two glass doors; but—for a moment—he found it quite as much as he could do, to stand near them, without being himself driven from the ever rising force of the gale, inward.

A lull came, and with a bang and a vicious kick at the wooden framework,—he closed the windows, fastened them, and drew the bolt at their base.

“There,” — he muttered triumphantly, turning to his escaping gas jets.

But,—again, he was foiled in his effort. For, in his impatience, he had flung the matches from him; hence, either he must grope about and find them, or else—he must

ring for his servant to bring some more. He hated the latter alternative; so, trod carefully about, seeking with his long feet, to come upon the missing article.

By this time, he was past all words. A few muttered ejaculations alone expressed the fever of annoyance and irritability, into which he had worked himself. At length, however, the little box was found,—the room lighted,—and, himself, at liberty to follow his own will and pleasure.

But,—nothing pleased him; nothing interested him. He was fretful and irresolute. He tuned his violin, but when every note was ready, — quivering, — waiting, for his touch,—he took no pleasure in it, and left it to go and try some other instrument. His small, though exquisitely toned, American organ, seemed for a little while to engross his attention; but, it was not for long. During one of his soft and dreamy airs, the wind came howling down his chimney, and driving round the corner of the house, pushed and smote against his windows; whistling in through the crevices, raising and flapping the loose edges of his drugget,

and so bewildered him by its noise and discord, that he left his melody unfinished, and went to fetch his 'cello. This, he thought, would be more suitable to hold its own, and agree with the variable accompaniment, that it would have to put up with. But even, the 'cello did not prove to his taste, deep and rich and melodious as its great notes were. Morally and mentally, the violinist must have been out of sorts. Everything was wrong. He had been all right that morning, sound and healthy both in body and mind. But now the wind,—which usually he loved to revel in,—had risen;—the darkness had come;—the room was a bad one for sound, and, at this very moment, he declared, was letting in all the ugly, discordant sounds that it could from the outside, and none of the beautiful ones.

In despair at his own inability to please himself, and at the general annoyance of everything around him,—he threw himself into the only vacant chair in the room. All the other chairs were laden with loose music and music books.

“I'll sit and listen then,—*only*,”—he said,

speaking in injured tones,—“for a while, but—only for a while,”—getting fierce and angry about it,—“they shan’t have it all their own way,—they’ll have to play and give in to me, after a bit,—not I, to them.”

(He was speaking of the winds.)

Wherewith, he leaned back in his chair, closed his eyes, and tried to do, as he meditated doing.

For some time,—it might have been half an hour, or rather longer—he sat there, not motionless, but fidgeting about in his chair; his flushed face changing, his delicate, long-fingered hands moving restlessly about, and his whole outward demeanour expressive of the inward state of fermentation.

He wasn’t happy, or at ease, yet. His spirit *was* to be moved by the rising spirits without, but—he must wait long enough,—get through the uncertainty and vexation of this first part, when nothing was right, and nothing would respond. It would be all beautiful, — fantastic, — dreamlike — *after*, when—the *after* came.

The coolness and the part-separation, which had—by some means—no fault of his,

—come about between his brother and himself,—would be a thing of the past. Again,—they would be knit close; again,—the power of sound would seduce him with her beauty, and he would yield himself to her charms, and know and care for nought else. Why should he? What else was there in life worth living for, except music? If other men liked other things, that didn't matter to him,—they could if they chose. But they needn't try and despoil him of his idol, and tell him that, beautiful as it was, its days were numbered. Pshaw!—what cared he?—there was only one other thing beautiful and satisfying,—and that was, his fair-haired child-pupil;—the delicate, highly-strung little girl, who could already draw from her violin, sweet and tender notes, pleasing even his sensitive ear. The child whom he had, at first, thought was a child-angel; whom he had learnt to love, and might love, and who—he knew—shyly loved him too. But,—they had taken her away, they had snatched her from him,—in the same way as, not long before, when he had nearly held something real and very sweet to him, nearly

possessed himself of a dream made real,—it had gone,—gone, not altogether, but gone, because it was changed. And now, someone,—someone wished to despoil him of his genius, of his second self, telling him,—what did he tell him?—he couldn't remember,—why should he remember?—he didn't want to remember. It didn't matter to him,—he wasn't going to pay any attention to it, even if he did remember it.

Franz Humbert had a conscience ; but he, being a strange, eccentric man, possessed—what some would call—a strange, eccentric conscience ; if conscience at all, it could be called. Whatever it was, however, it pricked him most forcibly at this point in his meditations, and mental grumblings. He could remember perfectly well, what the “he” had said, whom he chose to consider wished to despoil him of his genius. He could recollect word for word,—as if he were hearing it at that very moment,—the gentle reproof he had received, for allowing his every thought, his every idea, his every everything, to be centred entirely from beginning to end, in himself. He could

remember that the telling of this, had not made him angry, but had simply caused him the greatest surprise and wonder,—so little had the idea ever occurred to him before, or the littleness and wrong of it ever been, before, brought home to him. He remembered at the time being touched,—not by the reproof, *that* only had caused astonishment,—but by the beauty of the words that were spoken after the reproof,—words that had opened to him, a new meaning to all the susceptible parts of his whole nature,—words that had stirred his soul with a newer and nobler emotion, than that which his own genius, his own power of musical expression, had ever been able to do. And this again had, when he came to think of it afterwards, caused him surprise.

But, all this purity and innocence of thought had come to him, whilst his impressionable nature had been under a certain influence. Removed from this influence, or rather, breaking loose at times from it, the violinist became rebellious. He wanted to return to his old, unapprised thoughts; to dream along in his old dreams; to

slumber along in his old sleep. Why not?—He was his own master. What had any man, or any man's words, to do with him?

It is both curious and deplorable, how very little, men and women understand, either of their relationship one to another, or of the position that they occupy in the world. They pass through life, with no knowledge of their duty to, and their fellowship with, their brother man. No conception of that grand 'Humanitarian Catholicism,' in which it is man's true and rightful state to live, apparently, has ever penetrated their brains, or—more profitable still—touched their hearts. They live on, some through choice, some through ignorance, with, as it were, a broad line drawn in a circle round them; through this, they either will not, or do not know how to break. In the case of those who do not know,—who are narrow and small-hearted, because they do not *know* the beauty and the right of being wide and great-hearted—there must be pity; but in the case of those, who choose to remain within their limited and despicable self-made circle,

—there must be, there can be only, condemnation. To join hand in hand and to work onward, regardless of self and the rights that self would claim, for the good of mankind in general,—is the duty of *all*; and not the individual privilege of a *one* philanthropist, or a *one* preacher, or a *one* prophet,—as some seem to hold it. The poet's question

“ Ah ! when shall all men's good
Be each man's rule ? ”

has, even in Utopian States and Elysian dreams, received but a wavering answer. Yet—it would seem time now, after eighteen centuries of Christianity, that a common, practical answer should have been given, not in words, but in the lives of the mass.

Franz Humbert's selfish life could only, up to this date, be deplored, not condemned. His early life, his education, his nature,—all concluded to land him where he now was ;—within a diminutive circle, occupied by himself and his violin. Others had helped him to close himself in, by charitably cutting him off from themselves ; because he

was not, and did not even know how to pretend to be, exactly like themselves. This is often the case. Instead of arduously working for the good of a fellow man, people with more interest and more ardour, work for his harm,—thoughtlessly, of course, but not by that, it may be presumed, in any way, justifiably. There is, unfortunately, no middle course for people to take; for, even in reference to others, they either live for the good, or for the bad of their fellow-man. True,—there is a state called Balance; but it is only a delusive, theoretical state, and has no possible practical counterpart.

—The violinist's times of meditation, were never of the lengthiest. If he were recalling anything that at all fidgeted or annoyed him, he sought speedily to get rid of the subject,—by change. Thus it was that at this certain point, to which he had allowed his thoughts to stray,—he jumped up from his chair, and made his way to the door.

“I'm going out,”—he declared—as usual—aloud, for he seldom left his room in doubt of what he was going to do,—“Air's all choked,—tries to stifle me. Ugh!”—

He made a grimace, and laid hold of the handle of the door.

The room was quite clear. It was neither filled with smoke nor mist. There was nothing to stifle him in it,—it had been aired just lately, more than usual. But imagination can go a long way, and Franz Humbert's generally went longer than most people's.

“Shall I put on a coat, or shall I not?”—mumbled he,—“warm wind but—but a hurricane,—and the Heavens—ah!—all black and rolling.”

He was in the hall, and already tussling into his coat, as he spoke.

Before leaving the house, he visited his music room again, began searching there for something, but in the middle forgot what, so gave it up; and, with a few more words relative to the time he should stay out, he left the room and made his way to the front door.

Rather to his disappointment, he found that the wind was not howling and driving in at this side of the house; so he was able to step out in comparative ease and quiet.

Scarcely ten minutes had passed, however, before he appeared back again, in a state of

great excitement, and in the wildest spirits. Whilst out,—with a grand and heaving sky above, and great blasts of furious wind, catching him and driving him whither it would, below,—a new and, to him, brilliant idea had occurred. There was no room, no place in the whole of Abbeyslea, so wonderful for sound, as the old Church of Abbeyslea,—why should he not take his violin,—his brother—there, for a few hours? He had often been there in the long, soft, summer evenings, but now in the storm, to *feel* the—the terror,—the phantasy,—the beauty,—the loneliness of——

Even as with deft fingers, he hastily placed his violin in its case, and covered it with its doubled baize, before he closed it in,—his whole form was trembling at the thought of what it would be. But there was a strong fascination in this kind of fear that he felt, a fascination brought on by the near anticipation of keenest pleasure.

“Till seven only, — till seven?” — he murmured in dismay, looking at the clock, which had already passed the stroke of five, —“they lock the great door then, but I—I will beg for one more hour, just till eight or

—perhaps longer. Ah!—it will be my wildest dream,—my fearfulest, wonderfulest nightmare!”

He tossed back his head with its long yellow hair, and lifted his face as he spoke. A beautiful, effeminate face, with delicate outlines, and sensitive expressions; and the dark-blue, almost purple-coloured, eyes shining black, in their more than usual excitement.

Yet, though he was in a hurry, and caught up his violin-case, as it were to hasten immediately from the room and the house,—he dallied. With unwonted care and forethought, he remembered he had left his 'cello, between the window and the door. He saw it, felt the draught it was in, and hauled it across the room, to an inner corner, where it generally resided. Before he left it, he touched its strings gently with his fingers, and muttered something softly to it. Then, —on his way back, he stooped to pick up some of the stray sheets of music paper, which the wind had previously scattered; and, gathering up the dry, dead leaves, which it had also swept in,—dropped them also in the fireplace. After this, he gave a

look around, sighed a sigh of contentment, and—left the room.

But, he hadn't been gone a minute, before he was back again.

"For the last time," he murmured, darting to his organ seat, and laying his fingers on the notes.

But why he said—"for the last time," he did not know; only,—his face was white as he said it, and his lips, trembling. A deadly fear and dread had seized him,—where it came from, or what it meant, he could not tell.

The feeling, however, was but momentary. Ere half a dozen chords had been struck, the wild pleasure of carrying out his desire, was again upon him.

"Away,—away," he exclaimed, jumping up and catching hold of his violin case, "Why do we wait—every moment's precious. Come, my brother,—come."

And before another minute had passed, he had left the house.

Alas!—was there no one to call him back? Was there no one with a stronger

and more real presentiment of coming evil, than that momentary one that he had had,—which had passed and gone, almost in the coming ?

Marcus Sinclair,—with his strong steady hand, and his subtle power,—he, once, falsely and wrongly, yet effectually quieted this strange, excitable man in one of his most passionate desires,—where is his hand now,—where his voice ? It is needed now,—ten times more needed to call him, to prevent the carrying out of this luckless design,—harmless in itself, but bearing with it, the darkness of a terrible catastrophe !

Ambrose Liddon,—one word, one look from him, would be enough, but—ah ! call him, the priest of God, back too, stay the unconscious act, spare him the sharp agony of remorse. *Spare* him,—he has been refined ; he has already presented body, soul and spirit at the High Altar of his God,—ah ! spare him, what need,—aye, what *need* has he of further trial ?

Alas !—God only knows.

There was no hand,—no voice. No call was given. What was—*was* to be.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

IN THE OLD CHURCH.

“GENTLY, gently,—when they come soft,—we must but whisper.”

It was but a whisper of a sound, that floated up through the chancel arch, during the lull; while only a murmur from the winds came from outside.

“Now rise, rise—meet them, don’t let them overpower us,—they are but an accompaniment, we—*we* are the mystery borne upon them, *we* are the true, lasting power, *we* are—O Heavens!—it is terrible,—my brother, my soul, rise,—rise higher,—discord,—lacerate, but—ah! victory,—they sink, and we—now for melody, now for sweetness. Is not this Elysium,—to rest, oh! to rest in this,—to dream and not to think, only feel—*feel* what is beautiful, and be at peace. Rest, my brother, rest awhile,—this time, let us listen—only.”

With drops of moisture standing on his white brow, and with his violin lowered, the violinist turned gradually round. He had been standing at the foot of the five stone steps, leading up into the chancel; standing there facing the East, and with the volume of sound from the driving round and howling of the wind from outside, seeming to come up with its whole force, straight from the body of the Church.

But now, he had turned to face the sound, with his eyes raised towards the carved roof of the Church. He dared not look down the dark aisles, where the pillars he could not see, rose and echoed back the sound, and where—down further,—far beyond in the darkness,—stood the ancient tower, down which and into which, the wind most madly rushed. He was afraid of what he heard and of what he couldn't see, when he, himself, was not joining in, and making the wild music from outside, more weird by the mingling of his own. He was afraid to realize that he was there in the old, strange Building by himself, with only a faint light burning from the chancel lamps, lighting up

the Altar and the dark choir seats, and the old, irregular archway of the walls close round,—but leaving all else in almost total darkness.

And as he stood and faced the darkness, and heard—first, the rising moans, as the wind strove in the crevices and hollows of the tower, and then the wild and awful rush it gave, as, when caught within, round and round it drove, thundering and booming out its power,—he trembled, and gave a step downward.

But again, the wind sank and there was a lull, and he turned back, trembling still, but with the fear and dread of what was coming,—gone.

“I will go higher—beyond,” he said, moving nearer the chancel steps, with his face again towards the East, “and hear it all coming up more distantly,—it will be grander yet—yet dreamier, and upon it we can . . .”

He stopped abruptly, and the expression of his face changed.

“Why shouldn’t I?” he muttered fretfully, placing his right foot impatiently on the first step, “I used to,—yet—”

He stayed his steps. The rumble and moan of another blast had begun, and in fear, lest again it should be as the last, Franz Humbert drew his bow across his strings, and dashed into a rapid and stormy Fugue. It was one, with apparently no air and no melody in it; yet, it accorded well with its wild accompaniment.

Just at this time, if the violinist's face had been turned the other way,—he would have become aware that he was no longer alone, with only the spirits of the winds as companions. He would have *felt*, not seen,—for the light was too dim,—that there was another presence in the Church. But he did not; he had his back to the nave;—he was looking up, and about to advance, to the East.

It was seven o'clock: time for the closing of the Church during winter. More often than not, Ambrose Liddon undertook the duty of doing this himself. A last visit to the House of God, before turning in for his long, lonely evenings, and a short prayer rising from before the Altar steps,—became to him a thing of nearly daily occurrence.

It was a part of his life in Abbeyslea : the House of God was to him a Place of Refuge, a Holy Ground, where he came to meet with his God. To Him, in His Own House, was presented the service of the day, and to Him was humbly offered, all that might remain of the service of the night. The few moments spent before the Altar, the mysterious closeness of communion that the son might hold with his Father, in his Father's House,—were moments of sweet refreshment, moments when the weariness and often apparent failure of the day's work, were forgotten, and only the power of a Divine Guardianship felt. Thus, it was rather the rule with the new Rector, than the exception, that he should every evening enter his own Church and see to the extinguishing of her lights, and the locking of her doors, for the night.

The eccentric violinist's occasional habit of visiting the old Church, in company with his violin,—was not unknown to the Rev. Liddon. Franz Humbert had, himself, all unwitting of the very possible rebuke he might receive for thus—as some would call

—violating the House of God,—told him of the hours he sometimes spent there, entranced by the beauty of his own music, and the sweetness of his own instrument. Nowhere else was he so happy in thought, or so successful in expression. True—at the time of telling, it had given the priest of God, a kind of momentary shock, to think of the Building, dedicated to Holy Services, being used for such a purpose. The mere pleasing of the outward ear, the mere moving of the natural,—not spiritual, sensibilities, the mere extraction of beautiful sounds, for man's honour and man's pleasure,—seemed to him as sacrilege in such a place. He felt a strong inclination there and then, to anathematize the evil-doer of such things; and to have declared his utter and entire disapprobation of such, even, occasional practices. But the man who had been quick and fiery of speech, and almost fanatical in his Church views and principles, when first entering Holy Orders, had learnt as the years went on, that in the ministry of Christ, there must be a Christ-like spirit shown upon all occasions, and for all time. And amongst

other of the virtues attendant on a Christ-like spirit, comes—Gentleness.

Each man or woman, that the priest of God met, was to him one of the beautiful and mysterious handiworks of the Creator. He saw in it, either the signs of ruin and decay, even in the midst of all its outward beauty,—or else, signs of the growth and development of that everlasting Life, which only is the glory of the one “handiwork made in God’s likeness.” It was therefore in the spirit of gentleness, that Ambrose Liddon worked his way with the violinist. Once roughly handle a piece of organism so peculiarly sensitive and so strangely, nervously—balanced, and the labour of years could not undo the harm done. Once reprove harshly and hastily, when the cause of the reproof and the meaning of it, could not be understood,—and the free, almost child-like, nature, would be smitten, and its trust and confidence lost for ever. So, at the time, Ambrose Liddon had forborne to chide the selfish, godless musician, for daring to come to the House of God, for so low a motive, as that only of pleasing himself.

—But, notwithstanding Ambrose Liddon's knowledge of this occasional practice of the violinist, he was considerably startled when, —on entering the Church,—he heard, above the noise of the angry winds raging outside, the piercing notes of a violin, evidently being played at highest tension. Having, however, firmly closed the heavy, oaken door, after a rather protracted struggle with the wind blowing dead against it,—he glanced up towards the faint light which always burnt in the chancel, during the hours of semi-, or entire, darkness, when the Church still remained opened. And there,—with one foot on the chancel steps, he immediately recognised, Franz Humbert's lithe figure.

Looking out of almost darkness, into the dim, shadowing light beyond, the Rector paused a few moments before advancing. He, himself was a man of strong imagination and keen sensibilities; and the strange picture before him and the stranger music, that was borne down to him in the midst of the wild turmoil of the whirlwind that was being caught in the Tower,—came to him, as something unnaturally weird, and something, also, unnaturally beautiful.

To him,—though in a far less degree than with the violinist,—music had its power and its charmed fascination. Perhaps this very fellow-taste, made him more lenient with the faults and failings of the self-engrossed dreamer; and gave his gentleness and influence a more than ordinary power with a man, who had so learnt to live with himself, and with his own genius, that he had come to consider the men and women moving around him more as figures in a phantasia, than living, thinking, working human beings.

Thus, for a few short moments, Ambrose Liddon stood at the lower end of the old Church, in a kind of trance, gazing up, with mingled feelings of pain and pleasure, at the violinist's swaying, graceful figure.

But, before long, he broke, with a start, from it. The stormy, rapid Fugue had ended, and was being succeeded by a soft Obligato. And as the player played, as the movement slowly, tenderly, advanced,—with it, the player also advanced. The first step on which his foot had rested, was now behind him,—he had mounted the five,—and, in an ecstasy, was moving slowly onward.

“Forgive him,”—murmured the priest of

God, hastening forward, as he became aware of the movement,—“ he promised not to,—though he could not understand why. But he has forgotten,—he is lost in his music,—Ah !—he does not know its sanctity.”

Close to the Altar steps, the violinist had passed, before Ambrose Liddon could gain his side ; and the latter, hoping not to startle him, had slackened his steps, as he drew near.

But though lost in his strange, unearthly dreams,—though become part with the music he was drawing forth, the violinist's ears were still keenly alive to the sounds, separate from those in which he was living. As he had trod past the choir seats, he had heard the light, rapid steps that drew nearer and nearer ; and, in a kind of terror, he had sought to move faster on.

But, it is possible with the violin—the most exquisite and the most human of instruments,—for it to gain a power over its player, beneath which the player is powerless. And so it was, at this moment, with Franz Humbert. He could not break from the soft, slow movement, which was sub-

duing and infatuating his every sense. He could not raise his bow from the strings, which were no longer—as it were—responding to his will, but—he responding to theirs. He could not move faster onward, when every step was taken *not* as he willed, but as he was willed. Thus, slowly and apparently insensibly, he had moved on, till he paused before the Altar steps.

Then—the spell broke.

With a cry of terror,—almost like a child's helpless cry,—he *wrenched* himself round, and made himself look.

What he thought it was that had been following him, what he expected to see, or what he hoped not to see,—he was too terror-struck to know. But, as he saw only the strong, marked face and the slender form of Ambrose Liddon, he gave a second cry—a cry of joy and boundless relief; then, folding his violin and bow under his arm, he raised his hands to his face, and burst into tears.

The priest of God laid his hand gently on the shoulder of the overwrought dreamer.

“You have gone too far,”—he said,

tenderly taking violin and bow from the nerveless hands, and laying them down on a seat close by,—“you have tried yourself, beyond your strength. Come and rest quiet with me for a few minutes, till you are yourself again.”

“I’m sorry, — sorry,” — murmured the violinist with child-like penitence, through his tears,—“I did not mean to,—I did remember, but—but I was led—led on. Oh!”—moaning, as mechanically he moved along, with his hand clutching hold of the Rector’s arm,—lead me to rest,—rest now, for I am tired.”

“Ah! my brother, you have been trying to find rest and peace in earthly things, even in your own genius,—when there is none to be found,”—sighed the Rector, guiding the leaning form into a seat,—“Yet,—yet, ah! —God knows I would lead you beyond,—aye, beyond all this.”

The violinist raised his wet, drooping lids. With a half-startled and half-inquiring gaze, he looked for a moment at his companion; then, with a long-drawn sigh, he closed them again.

“Don’t take me from here,”—he pleaded, —“it was rest . . . once,—only so short,—it passed away just as I knew it,—just as I could have sung for joy because of it. Ah! —let me stay here, it . . .”

The last words were almost entirely lost, for the human voice was soundless when the blasts of wind which seemed now to be shaking the Church from its very foundations, were at their height.

The violinist shuddered, and drew nearer to the priest of God. But, when next their voices could be again heard, it was he that was again speaking.

“Is it seven o’clock,—time to close?”—he was asking, almost angrily,—“Have you come to turn me out, and spoil my pleasure, because,—because you must lock it up for the night?”

And as he spoke, he jumped up from his seat, and began trying to look round for his instrument.

But the effect of the shock he had received, had not yet passed. He was still trembling in every limb, and as he sought to move alone, he staggered from side to side.

"You cannot do it," said the Rector firmly, catching hold of his arm, "but . . ."

"I must,—I will,—for the time is short," broke in the other querulously.

Ambrose Liddon glanced down the Church. He was calculating how much time he had to spare, before being due in Rich Lane, O — . This was one of the evenings that he was in the habit of spending in that mockingly named part, which was one of the poorest slums in the city. His work in Abbeyslea being comparatively light, he had proffered help in a crowded district, which had been gladly accepted by one of the hard-worked clergy of the town.

At the moment when Ambrose Liddon was thus gazing silently down the Church, there must have come a break, outside, in the black, rolling clouds ; for a broad ray of silver streamed right across the dark, old Building, and lit up with sudden beauty, its quaint pillars, low archways, and dark, oaken seats.

"How wonderful,—how beautiful, are the works of God," thought he to himself.

"See," said he aloud to the fretful violinist,

“the clouds have broken,—you will be no longer alone here, when I leave you.”

“Ah!—*beautiful!*—I knew she would come,—we were waiting for her. I have no,—no fear now,—I could stay here all night long,—so near,—so beautiful.”

The æsthetic dreamer spoke in a rapture of delight. But, the gleams of moonlight were to be but short,—even as he finished speaking, the heavy volumes of clouds were rolling over the bright iridescence, and the keen, silvery ray, that had shot across the Church, had disappeared.

The nave of the Building was again lost in darkness.

“Gone!” cried the violinist, in tones of direst disappointment.

In his excitement, he had raised his voice, forgetful of the Place in which he was.

“Hush!” said the priest of God, almost sternly, raising his hand, “we are in God’s House,—let us lower our voices and turn our hearts to Him,—the Creator and Giver of all.”

He had been waiting, aye,—even guiding on toward the moment, when he might lead

the musician's thoughts away from his earthly dreams and visions. Too suddenly to have attempted, would have been sure failure. Too strongly, too plainly to have shown his purpose, would have resulted, probably, in the defeat of that purpose.

But, the moment now had come. The violinist had been softened and quieted by the gentleness that had been shown. Even his music was not so near to him just now, as the companionship and voice of the new Rector of Abbeyslea.

"You have told me this before," he said, with a certain sober sadness in his tones, "but I can't remember,—I can't feel,—it is all so new. Yet I must have known it once, when I was a child—but, it is too long ago,—I can't feel it again."

His years only numbered thirty; but, the last ten had been years of such entire and utter loneliness and self-absorption, that they must have seemed of double length.

"Do you know what Day is drawing near?" asked Ambrose Liddon, with a low and reverent intonation.

"Yes, yes," replied the other exultingly,

“Christmas Day. I go to Church on Christmas Day, to listen to the music,—it is joyous,—beautiful. And then to the Cathedral of O —, in the evening. Ah!—the anthem,—the ringing choruses,—the music! Would it were Christmas Day, every day. But . . .”

He paused, as though trying to recollect something.

“But what?” asked the Rector.

“I . . . I have forgotten what Christmas Day is for,” said he, with a sigh.

Ah!—was it possible? In Christian England,—amongst the upper classes,—for such an admission to be made? Many a time had Ambrose Liddon, amongst his poorer and most ignorant brethren, told the story as for the first time, of the Infinite Love, which had made Christmas Day, the Day to be observed and rejoiced in, throughout all ages. But, to find one amongst the educated, righteous upper ten, not knowing this—? The thought leads onward. Who,—who indeed, can make measure of the long-suffering and patience of God? Who can limit by earthly bigotry the love shown by His Sparing Hand, or the forbearance

marked by His Divine Wisdom? It would be well, if fellow-Christian men looked closer to the love that should encompass all, ere they think they know aught of the Nature of their God, or of the way in which He would have them do His Work.

"Listen to me," said Ambrose Liddon quietly, taking the violinist's hand in his, "I have something to tell you. It is a more beautiful thought,—a more wonderful conception, than you have ever dreamed of in your most . . ."

"Ah!" broke in the violinist, "tell me,—I know—aye, I knew there must be some beauty,—some wonder beyond, that would last—perhaps,—for ever."

* * * * *

Only the first part of the ever-living 'Story' was told, but—it was enough.

"To-morrow,—Christmas Eve, at night," repeated the priest of God solemnly, returning again, at his listener's request, to the scene on the hills of Bethlehem, "the shepherds were watching their flocks, when suddenly . . ."

"I know,—I know it all," interrupted the impressible musician, raising his hand to his eyes, as if to hide a great light that came before them, "so beautiful,—I see it now,—I . . . but the chorus, the chorus of voices singing,—why can't I hear them? Ah?—I do not even know the music, and my own,"—thinking, as by habit, of his own powers,—“could not express—*that*.”

"No, it couldn't," said Ambrose Liddon, speaking as if his thoughts were far away, "to only one has it been given to express in music, the miraculous wonder and joy of that night. None before have equalled, and none now exceed the power of his conception."

He paused, and turned his eyes searchingly upon his companion's face.

"But, that man's genius was a gift, given for the showing forth of the Honour and Glory of God," he continued slowly and impressively, — "and yours,—my brother,—was given you for the same object."

"Yes, yes,—for the same object," repeated the dreamer thoughtfully,—but, he scarcely understood to what he was agreeing.

Time was passing. The Rector had for awhile forgotten his engagement in Rich Lane ; but now, with a start, he remembered it. Hastily, he drew out his watch.

“Half-past eight !” he said, aghast, “I must go immediately,”—addressing the violinist. “Already I am very late,—but you ?”

Franz Humbert’s eyes lit with a sudden light.

“Leave me the key,—I will lock the Church up,” he implored. “You have comforted, quieted me,—I feel no fear now, though the storm rise even higher. I must feel again, with my brother, what you have told me, and —”

A silver ray of moonlight gleamed again across the Church, and with its very beauty, his desire increased tenfold.

“It is *here* that I *must* feel it,” he cried, “I may forget, if I do not feel now, and I cannot think without my beloved brother. Let me stay,—don’t say I must go, yet.”

His face was full of entreaty. But the old, wild excitement had gone from it, and all

the old marked eccentricity of manner and thought, seemed to have flown with the Rector's quieting presence.

Ambrose Liddon noticed the difference.

"You may have the key," he said, quickly, moving away as he spoke,—“remind me to give it you, before I go.”

Late as he was, he yet could not leave the House of God, without first on his knees, before the Altar, asking a blessing upon the work to which he was going, and upon the fellow-man, whom he was leaving.

The prayer offered was short, but very earnest. In it, the vastness of the responsibility laid upon him, and the reality of his own human weakness, seemed, at first, to thrust out all other thought and all other knowledge. But, ere he rose to go forth on his night errand of love and mercy, these reflections upon himself and his own weaknesses had passed. God's Power and God's Love, God's everlasting Purpose, and God's omnipotent Wisdom—had become the great, absorbing thought of his whole being.

Franz Humbert had found his violin, and

taken up his old position near the chancel steps. He had already, softly, sweetly,—as if moved by a new idea,—begun playing.

“All for God’s Honour and Glory,—you will find rest in that,” said the priest of God, as he passed him.

But he did not pause as he spoke, but trod on down the central aisle.

“Yes, yes,” murmured the violinist, but neither—did he pause. He bent his head closer to his instrument and, with the priest’s words upon his lips, played on.

The Rector’s thoughts were “awa,” when he passed the violinist. The tender, delicate notes, alone, made him just as in passing, speak the words he had. But, before he reached the door of the Church, even these were forgotten again, in the great absorbing thought, that was possessing his soul. He had difficulty in opening the door, but—he did not know it. He had far greater difficulty in closing it again,—he had to bring his utmost strength to bear upon it, but—he neither knew, nor felt, what he was doing.

Still in the same dream-like absorption, when he had closed the door, he brought out the key from his pocket, and deliberately—as his habit was—*locked the door of the Church.*

At the moment of doing this, the absorption of that one thought lessened, and other thoughts flashed through his brain. He was late,—very late. What of his people in Rich Lane? What of the dying woman waiting for him, to kneel by her side, and pray for her? What of the children whom he gathered together in the wretched street, to take each to their wretcheder homes? What of the men,—brutal,—sunken,—evil men, who yet, with still the consciousness of something better, were assembled together to meet him?

These were the thoughts that came to him, —no others;—not one other,—not even that one natural,—simple,—reflective thought,—that would have undone the deed just done.

Deep in these thoughts, connected with Rich Lane, the Rector left the Church, and hurried away.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A HORRIBLE DISCOVERY.

“I WILL go now,—I am weary,” said the violinist to himself, passing his hand across his eyes, as though awakening from a dream. “What time is it, I wonder,—he wouldn’t like it to be too late.”

As he spoke, or—rather—murmured these words to himself, he looked at his watch, and found that it was getting on for eleven. Later than he thought, and yet,—had he thought at all about it, until this moment? Hardly,—he had been too occupied. Even the sudden rays of moonlight, that gleamed at intervals within the Church, had sometimes passed unnoticed by him. Even the quick, driving storms of heavy rain that had, during the last half-hour, been beating against the windows, mingling its noise with the still rising wind, had been lost upon him. For he had often during the time, which had passed

since the Rector left him, been entirely dead to all outer sights, and to all outer sounds.

He had been happy,—strangely happy. Not once had a thought of fear or, even, loneliness, crossed his mind. Not once had he stood appalled by the awful and ever increasing noise, from the storm without. When he had been conscious of it, he had gloried in the sound,—raised his head and taken pleasure in its magnificence.

His was no nature of ‘partials,’ ‘mediums,’ or ‘half-ways.’ When he was happy, he was very happy,—needlessly, absorbingly happy,—revelling in his happiness,—revelling in the charm that held him happy. But then again, it was the same, when he was miserable,—he was very miserable and very fretful; he felt the feelings more than most people, and they remained with him longer, unless someone or something came and forcibly took them from him. It was the same with fear; if once he began to be afraid, if once he began to imagine things that were not, and yet that might be,—then, every place and corner had its ghost and

shadow, every sound its fiend's cry, and every movement its stealthy follower.

And, it was a nature like this, that was doomed to pass a night, that would have made even strong-nerved, unimaginative men shudder.

Franz Humbert's mood was one of peculiar happiness, when he awoke from the dream, into which his music had charmed him. Perhaps, it was not entirely the music which had woven that charm. The dim consciousness of a close Holy Presence, and the rest that there comes with the sense of a fellow-man's sympathy, — wove into his melodies, and gave far more than the music alone could have given.

"Here has been rest for awhile,"—he said, as he carefully placed his instrument in its case,—“but, it is only a beginning,—broken off very soon. It is the thought that is the rest,—he gave it me,—Ah!—so real, so beautiful!”

He closed up the case, and placed it on one of the seats, as he spoke. Then he cast his eyes round the Church, looking first at the dark nave, and then at the dimly-lighted chancel.

With this look, his dreams and some of his entire happiness, vanished.

“Must I put out the lights?” — he thought to himself; and immediately, he was imagining himself in total darkness.

Leaving his violin case on the front, open seat of the Church, he darted up the chancel steps, made his way towards one of the standard candelabras, from which two faint lights were issuing. As he did this, he became aware of something else, which again considerably diminished his prior sense of security.

Splash,—splash,—splash,—came the heavy rain, brought dead against the window-panes, by the lashing of the wind. Besides this splash sound, was the quick, continuous spattering, upon the crisp ivy leaves, encircling the window; and the trickle, trickle already beginning, from the loosely connected, horizontal-lying rain pipes.

“Ah!—I shall be drenched going home,” grumbled he, buttoning up his under velvet coat,—the upper one being left on a seat below,—and shivering at the thought of the cold rain trickling down his neck, splashing on his coat, and spattering his face.

He looked up at the standard candelabra, and wondered how he could turn out the two lights, that were lit there. He looked above him,—below him,—and then began an impatient search in between these two extremes.

“They should put them plainer,”—muttered he,—“they should have something pointing towards them,—they shouldn’t hide them, but . . .”

The small gas communicators were there; and, at this instant, he caught sight of them.

Having, however, thus found the means whereby he could extinguish the light, and, thus put himself and the Church in the region of darkness,—he began to waver as to whether it were necessary to take this step, or no.

“I wonder what he does,”—he questioned querulously,—the ‘he’ always referring to the Rector, with whom he had been speaking,—“puts them out and then,”—shuddering,—“then walks all down to the door, feeling,—feeling his way?—I couldn’t,—yet,—if he’d wish it, I might . . .”

He was growing loyal and even partially

self-forgetful, towards the man, whom he began to recognise, was always very good to him.

“ I might light matches down the aisle,”—feeling in his pocket for his little box,—“ I could try, then, not to be af . . . and . . . ”

But here came another noise, which drove away every bit of his remaining confidence.

There was a rattle as of stones upon slate, a pause,—and then, a thud down. The wind which had been whooping and howling round the whole Church, had also been straining at one particular corner buttress. Just as its straining had accomplished its destructive purpose, the wind sank in one of its, now, very occasional lulls, and then—loudly had come the rattle, and heavily the thud.

The violinist was too frightened to think how and from whence, such strange, quickly following sounds could come. To him, the noise seemed quite close, just above his head,—the Building itself might be beginning to fall in upon him, for aught he knew. He must protect,—save himself,—cover his head with his hands,—stop up his ears with his fingers, so as not to hear more,—not to hear

it when it was close upon him,—just going to crush and kill him. So, with a jerk, he drew away the hand that had been resting irresolutely on the gas communicator, and raised it and the other hand to his head. The same moment that he did this, he closed his eyes;—it would be worse, even, than hearing, to *see—it* coming.

But, the fierce wind rose again, and stormed round and about the Church, and yet nothing—nothing lowered down upon the bent head and stooping figure of the waiting violinist. He heard nothing except the sound which whirrs through the head, when the hearing organs are closed. And he saw nothing, for his eyes were fast shut.

After a while, however, as nothing happened, he gained enough courage, first to lower one hand from the side of his head, and then the other. On doing this, he found that he could hear the wind outside, and that was all; there was no repeating, horrid rattle, and no dead, heavy thud going on. So, he would be brave enough to do something more;—he would raise himself on his feet, and slowly draw up his body to a stand-

ing posture. If nothing happened,—if nothing prevented him doing this,—then, he would open his eyes, and look round.

Nothing did happen. He rose to his full height,—which was only medium height, and nothing came in his way except the standard candelabra, which he could feel when he stretched out his arms and hands around him. But *this* had been there before. So, with quite a feeling of returning confidence, he opened his eyes.

Darkness.—

Nothing had pressed down upon him, while he had almost knelt, with head and ears covered, and his eyes shut. But now, —standing upright, with his ears and eyes open, something was pressing down upon him, and pressing in within him. What was it?

Darkness.

Yet, though he only felt it now,—since the moment he had closed his eyes and raised his hands with a jerk to shut out, if possible, the sound from his ears, it had been there, just as much as it was now. But, there was a wide difference between then and now,—

then, he had been unconscious,—*now*, alas! —he was conscious, of it.

Curiously,—for, his nature was one which, either for the one excess of feeling or the other, generally expressed itself openly in sounds,—he stood in silence, looking into the darkness, while it crept in, moment by moment, close to him. He abhorred darkness. It was to him a fell Being, touching,—torturing, with its unseen yet felt presence.

Again,—curiously, his brain remained sufficiently clear, in the midst of his semi-stupefaction, to allow of him after a minute, recalling to mind one thing, by which he could account for the sudden obscurity around him.

His hand had been on the gas-communicators, as the shock of strange noise had come; this hand's sudden removal must, by ill-luck, have turned off the light. Upon this fact, upon this misfortune, his mind dwelt. It passed on to no other thought; became conscious of no other idea,—not even the natural one, of how best to remedy what had happened.

He had matches in his pocket,—there was the gas candelabra close beside him; thus,

he had the means of turning the elastic fluid on again, and lighting the two jets, that had been lit before. More too, if he had wanted. He could have lit up the whole chancel, if he had willed. He could have spared himself some of the frantic terror, at the double discovery he was yet to make, *if*—he had been practical. He would have saved,—but nay; even in a lighted Building, even with his great horror, Darkness, removed,—would he, could he have saved himself from ——

Standing silently, fearfully there, with only that one thought in his brain—the thought of his misfortune, and the one feeling,—the feeling of the creeping, sounding darkness,—Nature took pity on him.

Aslant through the southern windows of the Church, suddenly the moon's light shone. Part of one of the transepts was lit up by it, also the stone chancel steps, the candelabra, by which Franz Humbert was standing, and the hand that he still had stretched out towards it.

“She has come,—come,” he panted, regarding the gleam of silver in the light of a deliverer, “Oh! let her stay, till I can reach

the door,—the porch,—and then, the wide, open Heavens ! ”

To be outside,—free, with no enclosed darkness, or terror of strange noises ; to be away, back in his house, safe,—had become the passionate desire of the moment.

He dashed out of his darkness into the broad ray, extending slant-ways down the chancel steps. His waving, yellow hair, shone as gold in the light ; but, it hung back damp and heavy. His face was dead white, and rigidly contracted. Already, the delicate, over-sensitive organs of his being, had had enough ;—already it was time,—quite time for him to be going.

Down that side aisle,—the only lighted one,—he hurried.

On his way to it, he had passed the seat on which he had left his violin, and over the back of which he had hung his coat. He had seen neither ; not even to his beloved ‘brother’ had he given a thought,—for, no thought had he to give. Only one thought was possessing him, and in that—this time,—his closest boon-companion had no share.

Close,—closer to the great, oaken door he

drew. It was dark all around it; dark and cold, with bare stone-paving to the feet, and crumbling stone above. And, though still, parts of the Church were lit by the lingering silver ray, beneath that kind of low, carved archway leading to the door, there was a black, dense darkness.

“One moment more, and then I shall be free,” cried the ill-starred violinist, not pausing before the darkness that met him, but plunging into it, with his hands set well before him.

He reached the door,—touched it,—and felt for the heavy iron ring, connecting the latch. On finding this, with trembling, yet tight grasp, he turned it.

The wind was still driving straight against the door, as it had been when Ambrose Liddon had opened and then, struggling, closed it after him. At first, as the door refused to open, Franz Humbert only thought that, in some way, the latch had caught. Patiently, carefully, he turned the great iron ring, first to one side, then to the other; pulling it forcibly towards him, each time as the latch appeared to lift.

But,—it was no good. There was a dead, strong something, before which his strength of pulling, and the wind's of pushing, proved useless.

Still, however, the truth of what had happened did not dawn upon him. He grew frightened and wildly impatient, but it was only because of the darkness around, and of the time he had to be spending in opening the door. He did not dream yet, that do what he would, that door could never be opened, except from the outside.

“Why keep me,—why keep me?” he muttered. “I would be gone,—free. The darkness is full,—moving closer,—aye, grasping me. I cannot, cannot bear it.”

With the sound of his own muttering voice, he grew more reckless. He kicked at the great, heavy door, and then with all his puny strength, caught hold of its handle, and—though unturned, and thus still latched,—pulled hard at it.

The darkness around him seemed thickening; his own frightened breathing was coming in short, painful gasps, and the wind from outside was bellowing into his straining ears.

Suddenly,—he ceased pulling, and let loose his gripping hold. The next moment, there was a quick, scraping sound, and then a flash of light.

The thought had come.

Franz Humbert was igniting a match, to see if he could see, whether it were the fault of the latch that the door wouldn't open, or whether it were—*something else*. He had remembered about the key that Ambrose Liddon had forgotten to give him; and, with the memory of this, had dawned the other awful thought.

The draught from the door, caught the flicker of light, and before the dismayed man could shelter it, blew it out. Another hard scraping,—another flare of light,—then, instant darkness. Another light, and then another,—then others following quick,—each extinguished with the first flicker.

A pause.

The box of matches had been less than half full. Two more, now, only, remained in it.

With a shrewdness, borne upon the wings of terror, the violinist stayed awhile, his reckless attempts, to discover his own fate. With

one clammy hand, he felt again for the iron ring, connecting the latch ; then, he passed the other hand slowly down the chinks, between the door and the stone-work. Just by the latch, and thus close to the hand holding the ring, he stopped the downward movement. Then, thrusting his body close up, close as it could go to the chink, and freeing his arms and hands,—he bent his head for his last trial.

The first of the two remaining matches, ignited feebly,—wavered, and then, notwithstanding the quick, protecting hand,—went out.

No fault of the winds. The match was a bad one.

With the horror of the certain knowledge close upon him, and with the last hope *almost* gone,—Franz Humbert frantically struck his last match.

A flash,—a flare,—a flame upward ;—a face, pale and still, but with yet the gleam of a hope upon it, *then*, as the eyes saw,—a horrid contortion of every muscle and every feature, in that face.

The petrified fingers still held, the burning

match. The eyes, — petrified too, they seemed, — glared down greedily at the lessening flame. It was the last bit of light; — when it died away, when its last spark was gone, — then, *then*, there would be utter darkness, — *then*, the appalling terror, before which his brain was tottering, would begin.

But, the tottering brain had still one thought. It remembered that a ray of moonlight, had once gleamed aslant the Church. Therefore, — when the last spark from that match had expired, it, — the petrified body — would feel its way inward from beneath the low archway, in which it were standing; — it would feel its way, — get out of the clutch of darkness, by going towards, — by stepping into, *this*, — the light that had once been there.

The last spark slowly died, and the hungry eyes fiercely watched it, — watched it, till it was dead. Then, a low, shuffling, stealthy movement began, — a movement not of feet, but of the drawing of a form along a stone paving, — the feeling forward of hands and knees, — the stifled, gasping breathing from a head buried low.

Alas!—why had that one memory, that one hope, remained?—The pitiless clouds had rolled over the silver light, the ray that had lit the Church was gone. All lay in darkness.

As the creeping, grovelling violinist raised his face to see, and saw—*nothing*, he sprang upward. A high, terrified cry, once,—twice,—rose above the sound of the howling wind, and then, there was silence,—silence, until again the blasts of wind lowered, and there could be heard, the *low shuffling, stealthy* sound of the body dragging its length along, searching,—searching for the light, that was not there.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

‘ WHITE AS DRIVEN SNOW.’

It was already past midnight, when the Rector of Abbeyslea, tired out with his work in Rich Lane, dragged his weary footsteps homewards.

The hours he had been spending there, had been hours of singular triumph and singular success. It had been given him that night,—as it is only given on few occasions during a life-time,—to feel within him the whole living power, possessed by his God-given nature. And, not only that ; but the beauty and strength of this power was called out and made of visible effect, by active and expanding service. Often, these two,—the feeling of power, and the opportunity and capability of exercising that power,—are separated ; it is seldom, perhaps, that they may be said to walk hand in hand. But, upon this occasion, by the Divine Will and

for the Divine Purpose, the passive and the active powers were joined.

The influence which Ambrose Liddon had the power of exercising, was always a strong one. Had he not even, by God's Help, moulded himself into the man he was, he would still, probably, have been one of those men in the world, possessing a peculiar control and prerogative over others. His voice,—his face,—his very gestures, were unlike other men's, they were ever forcibly attracting, not by their beauty or peculiarity, but by their strength. The possession of a stronger and more powerful nature than most, gives this natural, elastic prerogative, capable of being used, either in the service of Good, or in the service of Evil. In the event of its being used in the service of Evil, the subtle, delicate workings, which are part of its charm, after awhile, disappear through disuse; and thus, the prerogative necessarily lessens. But, in the event, as in this case, of its being used for Good, its subtle and delicate workings expand and beautify; and thus the prerogative grows. Herein lies the fact, humanly speaking, of a good man's influence,

fully exercised, being far greater than a bad man’s influence, equally ardently exercised.

Upon this night, Ambrose Liddon,—humble, self-abasing man, as he was—had moved as a god among the people of Rich Lane. There had been the same vice, the same depravity that he had had to cope with before. There had been the same revolting scenes, the same hideous sounds, sickening the heart and appalling the soul,—as he had found there upon other nights. There had been the same dark ignorance, the same helpless misery, and the same brutal corruptions as before. But,—in the spirit of his living religion, he had moved in its midst this night, gifted, it seemed, with a greater power, and granted, it seemed, with a readier response to the exercise of that power. The men,—the women,—the children,—wretched, —godless,—castaway beings,—the scum of the town, and the despised and condemned of the rich,—were his brethren; bound to him by a tie he could never break, and made dear to him by a knowledge, he could never lose. Thus, guided by a Father’s Hand, and moved by a true brother’s love, the priest of

God had centred every thought in, and made every effort for, the Glory of that God, and the good of those fellow-brethren.

But, as no good can be wrought without earnest and laboured effort,—though at the time it is often unfelt,—so it was, that when that night's work in Rich Lane, was over, Ambrose Liddon reached his home in a state of physical and mental exhaustion. There had been an extreme tension placed upon body, soul, and spirit. There had been a pressure brought to bear on the nerves, the faculties, the feelings. There had been a strain put upon the whole nature. Natural, therefore, was it, that when the work was over and the tension loosed, feelings of utter prostration and weariness should have set in.

Heavy storms of rain, driving with the wind, had drenched the coat of the tired man, as he had made his way back to his home. Once or twice, when these storms came beating and pelting down, he had wondered vaguely whether, as the rain had come, the natural result would follow,—that of the lowering of the wind. But, that was all. He gave no other thought to the weather.

The sound of the wind, led back to no other sounds. No reflection of what had taken place, before he had hurried to the city. No memory of the mingling of music and wind, in the interior of the old Church. No thought of the conversation that had passed between him and the violinist within that sacred Building. No sudden, horrible recollection, as several times he fingered the Church key in the pocket of his coat, where it usually lay. Not a thought,—not a memory,—of what had come before.

It was a strange, yet not unnatural, thing that this should have been so. With a man of Ambrose Liddon's nature, the complete oblivion of what has just passed, in the earnest tension upon what is now present, is a matter of not unusual occurrence. Every faculty of the mind, and every emotion of the soul, had been brought to bear upon the work he was doing. On his way to it,—from the Church porch to the entrance of Rich Lane,—his whole thought had been occupied with ideas, connected with that work; and upon each thought, each idea, a blessing was asked, a prayer offered, a com-

munion held. Thus,—mind and soul were actively employed. On returning from that work, the tired brain ceased its active labour; it simply dwelt upon, what had just been. And the soul remained for awhile, in a state of mysterious exultation,—an exultation, alas!—which often comes just before the dawn of its darkest hour.

Had Ambrose Liddon been of a slow, calculating, placid temperament, the tragedy that was taking place in Abbeyslea's old Church, would never have been. He would have known what he had been doing, when he had locked the door, and put the key back into his pocket. Or, even if that had been done at the moment unconsciously, he would, in thinking over what had passed, and calculating upon what was coming, have remembered his mistake, and returned in haste to rectify it. Either, had he been of a superficial, fluctuating, restless temperament, unable to bend the whole attention, or the every faculty, upon the one work lying before him,—in all probability, the brain not fully or strenuously occupied, and the soul not strongly moved, would have had thoughts

and feelings for other things, outside the one thing upon which they were supposed to be set.

Thus, it was the strength,—the earnestness,—the power to concentrate,—and, even, the wrapt exultation in the Creator's Glory, and in the Creator's work, that had caused this strange oblivion. Incomprehensible to finite understandings, yet wise and meet to Infinite Knowledge,—the beautiful and lofty qualities in this nature were set, as it were at this time, not for the good, but for the harm of a fellow-man. And in the recognition of this fact, was to come to Ambrose Liddon the trial to the, hitherto, swerveless faith in Omnipotent Wisdom, and Omnipotent Love.

The priest of God slept that night, a heavy, dreamless sleep. Neither the storm of wind, which rose to a very hurricane, as the hours sped onward, nor the pelting of the rain against the bedroom windows, disturbed him. He slept on peacefully, unwitting of those passing hours, which were bearing him nearer and nearer to that terrible awakening of memory,—that terrible agony of remorse which had to come, and from which only for

a certain, portioned time, sleep was keeping, in pity, from him.

He awoke late,—with a start.

The storm had spent her angry strength, the rain had ceased, and there was a bright sun shining into his room.

“Christmas Eve,” he thought to himself, and smiled as the thought came to him:

Christmas Eve,—he looked out of the window and found the earth sprinkled with snow, and the sun glistening upon it. The wind, in lowering, had veered to the North; and the rain had given place to the fall of this soft, white covering.

“Just in time,—‘clad in robes of white she comes,’”—quoted the Rector, turning reluctantly from the glistening scene, and hurrying to dress himself.

Thoughts upon the Holy Day that was drawing near, seemed to entirely occupy his mind, during the next few moments. There was a look of peace upon his face. A face which, for all its strength and power, was peculiarly capable of expressing peace. And, when this expression was there, it rested as a kind of light upon it.

But suddenly, the light died.

“Who was it said, he did not know what Christmas was for?”—he said aloud, pausing in what he was doing, and contracting his brows, as though trying to recollect something.

Ah!—that was enough. The memory was not long, now, in coming. Not many minutes had to pass, before the tender curve in the mouth, and the soft look in the eyes, which had come with the first thought of the violinist, were gone,—gone like a flash of lightning,—so quick, so sudden, so relentless was the recall.

He stood as a man undone, while the thought came to him, striking through him, and blasting him with its horror.

Slowly he moved to the chair, over which his coat was hanging. He had hung it there last night, never having stopped in the hall to hang it up. A kind of dreary hope, made him wish to feel in the pocket of it, to see if the key which he knew was there, was—after all—*not* there.

The coat was still damp with the rain of last night. He shivered as he touched it,—

shivered and turned from it. He felt sick with the touch, and sick with the knowledge of that key being there. He had touched and fingered it last night,—he knew he had. He could feel himself doing it now; the touch of the somewhat rusty, well-worn iron, was still on his fingers. What,—what delirium, what dream had he been in, that he had not thought then?—had not ——

Delirium?—He must be in one now, to be letting the precious moments pass, and not be doing something. Dreaming?—the dream must be still upon him, that he was stirring neither hand nor foot to—what? To go and see what had come of his unconscious act, of the night before.

He seized hold of his coat, thrust it on,—he knew not how, and felt for the big iron thing with its ringed end, that he knew was there.

As he touched it, the same nerveless feeling as before, seemed to creep on him.

With a groan he broke from it.

“My God,—strengthen me,—help me to go and witness what I have done,”—he cried, dashing down the stairs, and catching up his hat, as he passed the hall table.

Alas !—too well he knew the high-strung, imaginative temperament of Franz Humbert, to think that he could pass through that long, noisome night, alone,—locked in,—with the terror of the storm around him,—without some disastrous effect, either to body or mind. Too well he knew,—too fully he felt ;—already in feverish outreckoning, the life of a man was upon his soul, and the life of a man calling out for its due vengeance.

On he sped, out of his Rectory gate, down the sloping lane, at the bottom of which, began the long, sharp ascent, up to the Churchyard gates. Crossing this lane at right angles, where the ascent began, ran the main road.

“ Oh ! for some *one* man’s nearness,—for some *one* man’s sympathy,”—yearned the Rector, for—strong man as he was, his heart quailed before his own thoughts and his own imaginings, as to what would be.

But, he was not meant to remain without human help. God’s face was being hid, as in a cloud ; but man’s was, yet, close.

It so happened that, just at this juncture, Dr. Sinclair was passing along the main road. He was on his way to an outlying house, and

—strangely enough—seemed neither hurried nor preoccupied. He was walking along with his head raised; and there was a spring and lightness in his step, that was not often there.

Before the Rector, with his dazed eyes, saw him, he had caught sight of, and was branching up the sloping lane to, the Rector. Whether he had anything special to say to him, or whether in the unusual brightness of his mood, he merely wished to be friendly, and to have a few passing words, cannot be stated. For, whatever he was going to say or do, was neither said nor done. Before he had advanced up many paces, he saw that something had gone grievously wrong with the man he was going to meet,—the livid face, the hurried, uneven gait, too plainly showed it.

A few moments, a few words,—and then, the two men hastened down the slope together, and up the steep ascent. The tall man's face was darkened, its nerves working; its jaw lowered. The shorter man's face was raised slightly, showing the brow contracted, the lips rigidly compressed.

Both were silent. What could words do,

at a time like this? What could Dr. Sinclair have said, when he—like Ambrose Liddon—knew the nervous, excitable nature of his friend, Franz Humbert? What assurance could he have given, when, like him, he feared what might await them within the old Church, nearer to which each step was bringing them? Words would have been as mockery; sympathy could alone be shown by silence.

The slight covering of snow that had fallen, was whitening the old Church roof. It lay also upon the buttress points, and on those loosened ivy branches, which the night before had swayed and beaten in the wind, against the dark, old tower. How well the Rector now remembered the sound of that frantic wind, rushing, whistling, howling round, and then bellowing within! How weird and awful it came to him again, not mingled now with music, but with cries.

“O Father, grant,—*grant* it may not be,”—prayed he, with his breath coming short and thick,—“grant,—grant,—for, with Thee, all things are possible.”

Then, steadily he drew the key from out of his coat, and placed it in the key-hole.

“Let me open it,”—said Dr. Sinclair, in pity for him, turning the latch as the lock was withdrawn, and himself entering the Church first.

They were not very long within.

There was no sound, no movement, save the sound of their double tread, as together they searched for what they had come to find. No word was interchanged between them,—no look,—no sign;—it was not needed. The confusion of the stools and books,—the broken glass of a small side window, lying low enough to reach,—the disordered, draggling curtains,—the strips of matting raised and twisted,—both saw,—and both understood.

Signs of disorder all around, but still no sound. If there had been cries and struggles,—there were none now. There was only the solemn, awful silence, that there ever is, in an old Church, which has watched many ages pass, and itself—has remained.

At length, the break upon that silence,—the sound of those two men's steps—ceased, for full five minutes. Then, they began again; heavier, slower, more irregular than before.

Outside,—the sun was still shining down with its brilliant winter splendour. Beneath its warmth, the glistening snow was slowly melting; dripping in rain-drops from the whitened roof, and trickling down the curbs of the path. The slanting graveyard, with its raised mounds, and ancient weather-beaten tombs, was showing patches here and there of grass, or of ruddy moistened soil. The scene around lay fair, fair as it could be, —with that brilliant sun shining and smiling down upon it.

Ah! but would that the sun had hid his face just then! Would that the earth had not been all white and glistening! Would, O would that the Heavens had been dropping heavy rain-tears!

They bore him out of the old Church-porch,—slowly,—mournfully. It was the form of an old man bent and shrunken, that they bore;—an old man clasping part of a broken violin; an old man with a bloodless face, and with long hair turned—*white as driven snow*.

CHAPTER XL.

LIFE FOR LIFE.

“THOU shalt give life for life.”

Willingly would Ambrose Liddon have given his life, for the life that he had, not taken, but spoiled. Willingly would he have given up all that he possessed, to the man whom he had dispossessed. Every faculty, every power, every sense, with which God had endued him, would he have gladly, thankfully relinquished. But,—the terrible knowledge of remorse is,—that, even in the renunciation of all, there can be no redemption; that, even in the literal giving up of a life, there can be no restoration to a life.

He,—the fellow-man whose life he had ruined,—would remain in that state of unconsciousness, in which they had found him, Dr. Sinclair said, for perhaps hours, perhaps days together. There could be no good done in waiting and watching by his bedside;

better, possibly, for him—the one who had injured—not to be there, in case of a recognition, or of a sudden memory connected with him. Better to let the nurse, who had been called in, remain there alone, with the order to communicate immediately, at the sign of change. And, until that change came, nothing could be known. Nothing of the physical or mental state, in which Franz Humbert would pass the remainder of his life, would Dr. Sinclair hazard an opinion upon. There was the possibility of the breath of life, passing away during that long, unconscious slumber; but it was only a possibility. The cord might break, the spirit might flee,—but, in the perfect rest and silence which was to be given, the chance was that it would not.

Ambrose Liddon had brought him to his own house, and borne him to his own bedroom, and laid him in his own bed. This life that he had stricken would be from henceforth, if it remained a life,—his life. His to care for, to tend, to watch over, to guard,—to be more precious to him by far, than his own life. Even if,—ah! if every

movement would need watching, if every word would need patience; still, that life,—the body, the soul of the man, the sap of whose life he had stayed, and the growth of whose physical, mental and moral force, he had stopped,—would be his to account for. Willingly, gladly would he do this,—even if it meant the entire renunciation of the work and the holy ministry which had been to him, ever his most precious calling. Even if it entailed, the relinquishing of everything that made life, life to him,—he would do it.

But,—this was not enough. God must take more from him. God must demand still further; must exact greater dues; must draw from him larger payments.

During all his years of manhood, Ambrose Liddon had never consciously, or wittingly, done harm to a fellow-man. His object had ever been to do him good, to help him forward, to encourage him, to be tender, gentle, kind to him. He, himself, would lift him from the mire of sin or doubt, if needed, and place him on firm ground; then, watch by his side to guard over the first feeble efforts

to stand. It would have been pain,—agony, to him to *hurt*. There was already too much wilful and thoughtless injury done in the world, without his adding his share to it. What was needed to lift, was the pouring in of honey, not myrrh; the bearing of goodwill, not malice; the giving of Love, not Hate.

Thus, it was with a two-fold horror, that Ambrose Liddon looked upon the injury done, by his act of thoughtlessness. To have not only hurt, but stricken, a fellow-man's life; to have taken from it all its youth and vigour; to have changed what was fresh,—young,—beautiful,—in the world's sight, to something that was infirm,—aged,—decrepit,—was to him a thing, not only most awful, but most criminal.

Yet the deed, by which this terrible change had been wrought, had not been a wilful, vicious deed. True,—the disastrous result, had come about through him; he, alone, being answerable for the cause of it. But, wherein had lain his great sin, to have brought about such a result? Wherein had lain the guilt that had made him so great a

criminal?—Had an act of thoughtlessness, become a heinous evil? Had a few hours of oblivion to what had been, become a gross and loathsome sin?—Let the God of Justice answer. Let Him Whom the priest of God had served, honoured, and—as far as in him lay—obeyed, let Him disclose His Meaning, let Him unveil His Purpose,—for, alas!—the faith of Ambrose Liddon was wavering.

What agony to a man, whose faith in God had been firm, swerveless, immovable, to feel that faith wavering! What shock to the steadfast soul to see nothing around and within it, but darkness,—the darkness of an awful doubt! He, who had through all his life, borne testimony to the infinite Wisdom and Love of God; he who had laboured for one end,—the Glory of that God, and for one object,—the good of his fellow-man; he who had shown forth the Creator in the light of a Father, infinitely kind, infinitely merciful, and omnipotently wise,—how terrible was it to feel, to know that his faith was slipping from him, and that he was questioning and even condemning the dealings of that God!

Pity the strong man, whose strength is failing, whose holiness is waning, whose soul having been filled is emptied, whose grasp having been secure is loosened. Pity him who has acknowledged, all strength, all holiness, all grace and all knowledge, to have been lent by his God, to—as at this time—doubt both the Wisdom of that God, and the benefits derived from His Gifts.—They say there is bitterness even unto death,—surely, that bitterness is most supremely felt by a good man, when the Presence of his God is removed, and the belief in that Presence doubted.

Once before, had the library in Abbeyslea Rectory, been the scene of a moral conflict. But then, there had been no awful spiritual darkness, and no horrible misgivings as to God's Justice. The tides of desolation had swept over the soul of the righteous man. The longing for the one precious human love to be restored to him, had been the cry from his breaking heart. But, this was all;—there had been no doubt of his Father's existence, and no swerving from the faith in His Love and Wisdom. The conflict of then had not

been as the conflict of now. *Then*, the Devil had come forth with an host, against the man of God; but now, he was coming with the whole powers of his fell kingdom, to essay if yet this one more soul, might still be his.

It was still only the afternoon of Christmas Eve. A year,—years might have passed since the early morning, so faint, so vague, was all that had come, before the dawn of that awful recollection. The Rector sat as one stunned; with his eyes fixed before him, and with his hands clenched. Thought after thought was flashing through his brain; thoughts, such as which, he had never known before,—questioning, combative, condemnatory thoughts. These were what had come after that first burst of overwhelming remorse, when, even, the renouncing of all in expiation of the unconsciously-wrought evil, had seemed but the half of what was due.

But now, there had come about a change. The humble, self-accusing, unnerved man had, —crushed and weakened by the shock of what had happened,—yielded to the assault that the Devil cunningly made. “Yea, hath

God . . . ?—Yea, doth God . . . ?—” the old temptation in its varied, seductive forms, was again used. And—before it, the man of God fell. He raised himself from his position of a finite being to the exaltation of an infinite being. He questioned God. He combated and condemned the dealings of God. He doubted His Justice,—he denied His Love,—he censured His Power.

But, it was with the acutest agony that each thought, each doubt, presented itself to his mind. He felt no sense of vicious pleasure, in setting himself against his Creator. He found no balm lying in his own human, isolated strength; no salve, in his own human freedom. Thus, each new doubt, seemed as a drop being pressed from his very life-blood; and each new charge as a pressing deeper into a smarting wound. No agony that he had ever felt before, had been like this; for, now, all that had been real to him, was flitting by in darkened shadows. The Rock upon which he had leant, was sinking beneath him; the Light, which had guided him, obscured; the Hand, which had led him, lost.

Upstairs, lay the old grey-hued man, with the long white hair, and the bent form. The man that, less than twenty-four hours ago, had been Franz Humbert, the gifted violinist, with his springing step, his lithe form, his yellow hair, his beautiful, changeable face. At times, the sight of this awful change that had taken place would come before the Rector's dazed eyes, driving afar every other thought. Then it would be, that he would cry out to his God,—forgetful that he was doubting,—condemning,—spurning Him.

“O God, it cannot be,—Thou wouldest not,—Thou, his Father, my Father,—Thou, Who lovest us,—Thou, Who sparest us,—Thou, Who showest pity not anger,—Thou, Who knowest our frailty,—Thou, Father, Thou wouldest, O Thou wouldest not that this should be.—Thy Will? Could this be Thy Will? Could this have aught great Purpose in it, by which Thy Glory might be established,—Thy Power known?—O Father, hear—Thou, Who art,—alter Thy Word,—change what Thou hast decreed,—stay Thy Hand,—undo what Thou hast done,—give him back his youth, his beauty, his——God!

where art Thou?—I know Thee not,—Thou hast changed.”

Ah!—each cry begun in faith, ended in this groping darkness. And in the midst of this darkness, the Devil would assault still more fiercely.

At other times, the earnest pleading, would take another form. The Priest of God would see in the old man lying there, *himself*,—not Franz Humbert. Himself, changed,—aged,—helpless;—himself, the one injured;—himself, the one demanding back the youth and faculties, that had been his. But,—the illusion would be but for a passing moment. Almost before it had appeared it would be gone again, in the midst of bitter, striving petitions.

“Strike me,—not him;—take from me, not from him. Let me,—me stoop beneath Thy hand;—let me bear the burden of a shattered life;—let me feel Thy God’s Power;—let me,—me drink of the cup of Thy—O God,—of Thy Wrath, if needs be,—but release him,—give him back, what Thou hast taken from him.—Hast Thou no Pity?—Hast Thou no Love? I have called,—I have striven,—

but, Thou art not near,—Thou hearest not,—
Thou answerest not, — God, God, — my
Father,—*art* Thou—? ”

Five o'clock struck.

Ambrose Liddon turned his head slowly to look at the clock, while it was striking. This was the first consciousness of time, that he had had, since Dr. Sinclair had left the house, at midday. He, Dr. Sinclair, would be returning again in an hour's time, now ; he would have returned sooner, if there had been any change,—if he had been sent for.

Change? How did he, Ambrose Liddon, know that there hadn't been a change? There might have been ; there might have been some little movement, some slight alteration in that terrified expression, some small expansion of those shrunken limbs. The nurse, who was with him, wouldn't notice it ; it was her duty to watch, to become aware of anything that took place,—but, she would not be watching with the fierce, eager, all-seeing eyes, that he would

have been. She would not have looked and bent over him, with the same fearful, hopeful insistence of a change, that he would have. He would go to him. He would watch. When Dr. Sinclair came, there must be,—there *should* be a change.

He rose,—staggering. The room was heaving around him; the noise of cries was in his ears. His figure swayed twice; but, did not fall. No food had touched his lips, since early the night before; and the conflict of the past five hours had been fierce and strong.

But, the man's mood was fierce, and his will, strong. He righted himself, and—though still staggering, left the room.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE OPINION GIVEN.

“It is possible that, in time, he may ”
“recover the use of his faculties. I ”
“state no period that must pass be- ”
“fore this change in his present ”
“condition, can come about, because ”
“it is not in my power to do so. It ”
“may be a case of years, but it may, ”
“on the other hand, be a case of ”
“months, only. The shock that the ”
“whole system and nature received, ”
“was a very severe one ; but, there is ”
“a certain flowing vitality about the ”
“body, and, from what you tell me of ”
“his temperament, there must have ”
“been in it, a certain elasticity and ”
“renitency, — which augurs well. ”
“Therefore I repeat, I do not hesitate ”
“to say that there is, a very strong ”
“possibility, that the mind will recover ”

“itself; either, suddenly, in which case”
“there must be great care exercised,”
“or else—by slow degrees.”

“Concerning the body which you”
“say, was the form of a slight, agile”
“man of thirty, medium height,—I”
“can premise little. Cases have been”
“known, when the sap and appearance”
“of youth, have, to a certain degree,”
“returned; but, of this, I can give no”
“personal evidence, and would prefer”
“stating no decided opinion.”

“One thing, only, else, will I add,”
“for the sake of those especially”
“interested, in this unfortunate gentle-”
“man’s welfare, and that is—that I”
“imagine that a great deal, both for”
“the partial, or entire, recovery of”
“body and mind, may depend upon”
“the circumstances, which are to sur-”
“round them, during the next few”
“months. If every care, discretion and,”
“above all, kindness, be shown,—it”
“will expedite and, probably, ensure,”
“what I have premised. There should”
“be no forcing of the memory, which”

“—for the present—is entirely lost;”
“and there should be a most careful”
“avoidance of all that might, in the”
“least way, shock or alarm. For,—if”
“there be any sudden panic, brought”
“on by fright, the result will be fatal.”
“The now harmless, simple gentleman,”
“will become a raving lunatic.”

This was the opinion given by a Specialist, upon the case of Franz Humbert.

It was an opinion received, by the majority of the people in Abbeyslea, both with surprise and misgiving. Horrible rumours of the state in which Franz Humbert lay, and of the physical and mental change which had been wrought in him, had winged their flight to every part of, and beyond, the Parish. So exaggerated, so multiplied, had been the reports, that something even worse than what was, if possible, was supposed to have happened. Thus, when a clever Specialist had been sent for and had, after much careful inquiry and a some hours' examination, passed his opinion upon the present and the, probable, future state of the violinist,—that

opinion was received with general astonishment. People had made up their minds for the worst view of the case,—the very worst; they were, thus, taken aback and, at first, somewhat incredulous, on receiving the best.

To Ambrose Liddon,—as he had listened to the words, slowly and deliberately uttered by a man, whose far-famed name for skill and knowledge, in cases of mental order, made his every word of meaning and importance, the view taken, came as the, almost, miraculous lifting of a dense, black cloud. Beneath this cloud, which had so suddenly and so unintelligibly lowered down upon him, he had sunk. In its dense obscurity, he had lost hold of his grasp on God,—that grasp which had ever been so sure, and so life-giving. And in losing God,—his Father, his Guide, with Whom he walked, with Whom he communed, he seemed to lose for the time his strength, his power, his self-restraint, and his very personality. Day nor night during the time intervening between that first terrible day, and the day a week after, when the Specialist arrived, did he rest. When he

was not watching by the bedside of the man he had injured, whose life he held he had irremediably blasted, he wandered aimlessly about, hither and thither; or, sat for hours in his library, striving to battle with the powers, that were ever stronger than he. That it were possible that the harm he had done, would not be a lifelong harm, his mind—darkened and dulled by the shock it had received—refused to allow even a hope to germinate. That it might be God's Will, in some way, to restore,—to resuscitate,—to breathe in afresh from His boundless Might,—he had, in the loosening of his faith, quenched every thought. Because the Presence of God was, as it were, for a time removed afar from him, therefore though he prayed in agony, he looked not for an answer to his prayer; nor considered the means whereby God might, in time, show forth the workings of His Mercy and His Power. The man of God, so strong, so faithful, so holy,—had, in this most fiery trial, lost the Hold, which would have borne him safely through these darkest hours of the Devil's temptations.

Dr. Sinclair had, several times, attempted to inspire a hope in the breast of the man, whom he saw with ever-increasing pity, was being crushed by his remorse and despair. Though, medically, he felt himself incompetent to pass any decided opinion, he—yet, by his physician's learning and knowledge, held hold of certain possibilities, which he knew might unfold themselves. The wide-opened, terrified eyes of the stricken violinist, as he lay unconscious and moveless during those forty-eight hours,—had not to him all the horror, that they had to Ambrose Liddon. The gradual awakening, amidst low cries of terror, and piteous, unintelligible entreaties, followed by the vacant gaze, the mumbling tones, the evident total oblivion of all that had ever been,—were not to him, as to the Rector, so certainly and irreparably the signs that the mind was for ever bereft of its reasoning, and that a life of hopeless insanity was all that was left to the violinist. But, though, when Dr. Sinclair had attempted to convey, something of the knowledge that he held, and something of the possible hope that he was nurturing,

Ambrose Liddon appeared to clutch eagerly hold of the straw held out,—it was only for a short while, that he allowed himself to be comforted by it. Reaction would all too shortly, set in. Dr. Sinclair, out of pity and sympathy, was trying to buoy him up, but it was with false hopes. It was kind,—sympathetic of him, and he meant it for the best; but, of what avail was it?

Notwithstanding, however, this determined resistance to the raising of any hopes, it was during this first terrible week, that Dr. Sinclair and the Rector of Abbeyslea, became drawn closely together. The priest, once so strong, leant upon the man, younger than himself, and of less powerful a nature. He, who had never looked to man for support, because it was ever he, himself, that was supporting,—learnt that, in weakness, he too must lean; he, too, in his relationship to his fellow-man, must, at times, be the one to receive, and not the one to give. The one to give, at this period, was to be the weaker, the less noble, the less capable, man. But, in the giving, this weaker man was to grow stronger, nobler,

more capable. And it was during this strengthening and expanding of the one, and during the transient weakness and debility of the other, that the seeds of a life-long friendship, were sown.

Throughout all Abbeyslea, universal commiseration was felt for the Rector. The man who had, six months before, come as a stranger, come, also, as some had at the time chosen to think, as an interloper, had won, with the exception of Mrs. Forrester and a few of her most servile friends,—the regard of all. Though from the very first day of his settlement in Abbeyslea, he had not hesitated to disclose and condemn errors, that had long been regarded as merely society foibles ; though he had come in and out amongst his well-to-do parishioners, not as a cultivated and pleasant society member only, but as a priest of God, with a priest's work and a priest's authority ; though he had pierced that veil of hypocrisy and pleasant self-content, that made up much of the religion of many in Abbeyslea,—yet, the feeling had grown to be strongly for him, not against him. In the depths of their

hearts, the people had felt that he was in the right, and that they were in the wrong; that he was setting before them the religion of Christ, while they had been content with the Devil's counterpart,—the religion of Anti-Christ.

It was therefore with deep pity, that the people of Abbeyslea regarded him, on becoming aware of the part that he had had, in the bringing about the terrible catastrophe. The majority liked to talk a great deal and expand a great deal, and repeat over what they knew, and improve upon it according to their several imaginations. But, beneath all this upper crust of talk, there existed a profound sympathy.

No one saw the Rector, through the days of that first long week. Some wished to, simply from idle curiosity; but most had a secret instinct that they would rather not intrude upon, what they felt would be almost a sacrilege to pry into. A few reports got about that, under the blow, Ambrose Liddon had become a changed man. That he was sometimes stunned, sometimes frenzied with grief; too distracted to pray, too rebellious

to weep. But the reports were speedily hushed ;—the people did not believe that such was the case with the man of God.

Little, therefore, did they know, and little would they have understood, the darkness of the hours through which their Rector was passing. The more strong, the more responsive, the more mobile the nature,—the more acute, the more exquisite, must be the feelings of that nature. The more holy, the more godly the man,—the more awful the darkness when the Devil assails and causes the fall of that man. None could have understood how fiercely and suddenly, close upon the shock of that terrible knowledge, had come the temptation to question God's Wisdom, and to doubt His Love. None, either, could feel to the utmost, how great was that shock of grief; for none had to the same degree, such strong, tender, and brotherly feelings.

By strange yet, surely, providential decree, the man most fitted to understand some of the dark workings within, had been the man who was brought into closest contact with the Rector of Abbeyslea. Dr Sinclair,—

atheistical as his tendencies were, or rather, had been,—was yet a man of so high-wrought and of so mobile a nature, that he could in some measure feel for and sympathize with, the man possessing these same qualities, though in a still greater degree. True,—he could not understand the terror of the soul cut apart, for the first time, from its God ; because his soul had never realized as that soul had, the mystery of God's continual Presence within it. But he knew something, aye—too much, of the desolation of a soul wandering in darkness, and appalled by its own isolation. Thus, instead of condemning the man of God for his weakness, and failing to comprehend him in his dark despair, he had drawn closer to him, and with a fuller and readier sympathy than he had ever been capable of before, had become to him the human support, against which he leant, during the days when the Light of God's Face, had been veiled.

It might have been thought, perhaps, that the witnessing of the fall of a holy man, would have been the cause of the scattering of Marcus Sinclair's feeble faith, rather than

the confirming and strengthening of it. It might have been supposed that, when Ambrose Liddon,—so zealous for the recognition of the Wisdom and Love of His God, and so earnest in his endeavours to show forth the Honour and Glory of that God,—that, when he bitterly questioned the existence and the infallibility of these Divine Attributes, that the scepticism of Dr. Sinclair would have become more sceptical by the knowledge of this doubt and rebellion.

But,—it was not so. The terror of the soul in its separation from God, confirmed the faith in a God; and the agony caused by the doubt of that God's Wisdom and Love, strengthened the desire to acknowledge, the unfailing existence of that Wisdom and Love. For,

“The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God, is stronger than men.”

He hath chosen the foolish things to confound the wise, and the weak, to confound the mighty.

CHAPTER XLII.

HE MUST BE 'TOUCHED.'

"FOR how long did you say they were going to be away, Marc?"

"For about three months,—perhaps, more. It will all depend,—no time really can be fixed,—there can be no certainty, and no"

"I understand. But, I want to hear what will become of the 'living,'—is Mr. Liddon going to give up altogether?—or, can he, Marc, get someone to take his place here until—I mean, to take his place here for some—time?"

The words that were about to follow that "until," were always omitted; no one dared take for a certainty what they would fain have expressed. The great Specialist's opinion, was still regarded with misgiving.

"It has all been arranged," replied Dr. Sinclair rather shortly, "a certain Mr.

Benison from L—, is to occupy the Rectory, and undertake the duty and the care of the Parish, during three,—or, it may be six,—or, even twelve months. As I said before,—no time can be settled.”

Dr. Sinclair had, himself, had some hand in the arrangement; hence, his disinclination to say much about it.

Three months had passed since the coming and going of that fatal eve of Christmas Eve, which had been marked by an event of so dark a hue. People were still talking about what had happened, and surmising about what would happen. They were still wondering whether,—if such or such had not been, whether such or such would have been. They were still discussing the pros and the cons of the case. They were still full of pity for the Rector, and full of curiosity about the change in Franz Humbert. They were still having doubts about the Specialist's wisdom and knowledge, in giving the opinion he did. They were still anxious to lend their own thoughts, and tender their own advices. They were still intent upon gleaning every bit of information

obtainable, taking it, manipulating it, putting their own light upon it, and—finally, metamorphosing it so completely, that where it ended,—if it did end,—its real truth and foundation were entirely lost.

But, when it became known, that the Rector of Abbeyslea had decided, to take the unfortunate and afflicted violinist away from the neighbourhood altogether for, probably, some months, and that he was not going to entrust him to the care of a keeper, but, himself, was arranging to be his constant companion and guardian, the opinion of the Parish in reference to this step, became both strong and divided.

Some thought the idea preposterous. Some accused the Rector of neglecting his priest's duties to God, for the sake of his exaggerated notions as to his duties to man. Some thought it an inhuman step, to attempt moving a poor, stricken imbecile, who would much rather be left quiet and alone, where he was. Some thought the plan dangerous to the country in general, and themselves in particular. Some looked a great deal and hinted a great deal, but refrained from many words; though, they were anxious to infer,

that they could scarcely be expected to approve of what was about to be done. Some thought that they ought to *see* the violinist themselves, and judge from his looks, his words and his actions, whether the arrangement meditated upon, was an advisable one, or no;—they couldn't know, or judge, without this, neither was it probable that the conclusion arrived at would be the right one, unless they, themselves, were thus admitted to be co-advisers in its decision.

But, there were others,—a few,—who were content to think that what Dr. Sinclair and the Rector were arranging, was for the best; that they knew far more than the outsiders possibly could know, and therefore the step that was going to be taken was, as far as human knowledge lay, the wisest, kindest, and most entirely for the benefit of him, for whom all efforts, at all costs, were being made.

—“ Claire, I want you to come with me to the Rectory, this evening.”

This was Dr. Sinclair's next remark to his sister after a few minutes' silence, that had ensued between them.

She started.

"To the Rectory, Marc?" she said in low but surprised tones, "but no one goes there, except you. I thought,—thought . . ."

"No one has been, except me," he said, laying his hand on hers, "but I want you to come this evening *with* me, Claire. You are not afraid, are you?"

He spoke very gently.

"No, Marc,—I'm not afraid," she answered, her voice still lowered, and the colour in her face coming and going in quick succession, "but why,—I mean how——"

"I will tell you, Claire," he said, drawing her closer to him, so that she should feel the power and strength of his presence, as he spoke, "if you are not afraid,—if you can really bring yourself to do, what will be a great effort, and a great—perhaps, trial to you,—you may be able to do what we, with all our efforts, fail in. There may be a touch from your woman's hand, and a note in your woman's voice, which will . . ."

"Marc, must I see him?" she cried, hiding her face in her hands, "must I speak to him, and . . . and touch him, when—oh! when he is so changed,—so different?"

"Yes, Claire."

"I can't, Marc,—I can't."

"Yes, you can," he said, with that quiet, yet forcible intonation in his voice, which invariably gave to his hearers, the feeling that what they had said they couldn't do, was not after all, impossible,—“and I think,” he added, softly stroking her hair,—“that if you know that in this way, you may be a help,—you may do what we cannot do,—you will *like* to do it,—you will not find it so hard, as you think you will.”

She didn't answer for a moment, but she raised her head and looked closely at him. Then she made a remark, which did not exactly bear upon what they were speaking.

"Marc," she said, with a strange satisfaction in her voice, "how like Mr. Liddon you speak sometimes,—just of late. Quite different to what you used to."

"I'm not what I was before I knew him," was his open avowal, "it is impossible almost to live with him, as I have been doing for the past three months, and not to think and feel in a different way, to what I did before. But —"

He paused.

"I remember I said something like that to you, once, Marc," she said, disregarding his evident wish to return immediately to their first subject, "and you thought then, that it was only women, who could be . . ."

"I know," he interrupted, hastily, "I said something about women being volatile and plastic, and ready at any moment to change their ideas and opinions. I had a narrow kind of notion, you see, Claire, that men should stick hard and fast to what circumstances, and their own experiences and knowledge, led them to hold. I thought that a man who could change his views of life after he had reached thirty, must be but a poor shilly-shallying fool, with no mind worth having. But,—I think now, that the poor fool is he, who is so narrow-minded as not to wish to have his mind further opened, and his notions expanded. If we're not to change or improve after we're thirty,—for fear of being called unstable,—we might just as well employ all the rest of our lives, after that point is reached, in trying to prove that continual growth and development of

the mind is a myth, that——but, Claire,—we are wandering from what we were speaking of;—I have only a few minutes to spare,—will you think over what I have asked you?”

“Tell me a little more, before I say,” she said, evasively, “I don’t want to be selfish, I don’t want not to do what you think I can do,—but I’m so stupid, Marc, and—ignorant, I shouldn’t know what to . . .”

“Claire, let me tell you the little more, before you think about what you can’t do,” he interrupted, gravely. “You know that Mr. Liddon is thinking of taking Franz away from Abbeyslea. One of the reasons why he is doing this is, that we cannot get the poor fellow to rouse himself, or notice anything that is going on around him. He is very fairly well in bodily health,—is able to come downstairs every day,—takes his food regularly,—and sleeps well at nights. But, he notices nothing,—takes interest in nothing,—but sits for hours with his head bent down on his chest,—not asleep, but entirely—perhaps, unconscious that there is any life, or movement, or reality, around him.”

“But, Marc,—don’t you talk to him, when

you are with him? And isn't Mr. Liddon always close by and waiting on him,—ready to do anything and everything for him. I thought you told me that that was how you were trying to—as it were—awaken him?"

"Yes, Claire—the Rector does all that, and more,—I never saw such exquisite tenderness, as he has with him;—every possible whim, or fancy, or thought, that Franz can have,—is entered into. But,—there is no response; nothing more than the repeated murmur of—"I don't know who you are,"—or,—"you're very kind,—don't leave me." There comes no smile, no question, no light in the dull eye, no movement of the listless fingers,—no wish, no desire, no sign of anything stirring within."

"But, perhaps it is too soon yet, Marc, to look for any perceptible change," said Claire sadly, trying to blink back the tears, that would rise to her eyes.

"You are right in one way, in thinking of that," he replied, speaking slowly, as though weighing his words. "I try to assure myself of that, too. But, one must also regard the liability there is, of this growing on him

and becoming permanent, by time being allowed to elapse. I am not in a hurry,—I do not expect miracles to be worked,—I am not anxious for any strong measures to be taken,—neither am I despondent in any way, as to the possibility of his mind being restored, and the memory of his past life,—associations,—and friends, returning to him. But, I do think that means,—*all* wise and careful means should be taken to help forward, what Nature cannot do by herself.”

“But what good can *I* do,—just seeing him, perhaps, for a few minutes, and speaking to him, Marc?” asked Claire, dubiously.

“It might do a great deal of good,” he answered, with assurance, “Franz has known you,—has known you very well, Claire. Not so long ago, you remember, he looked upon you as his living ideal—you were part of his music, his . . .”

“Ah!—his music, Marc,—has he no memory of that,—yet? Doesn’t that recall? Doesn’t that bring back any light, or interest?”

Her brother did not reply for a moment. He turned from her, and walked to the

window. She had touched upon what was a source of continual perplexity and anxious thought.

"I dare not, Claire,—indeed; Liddon and I dare not even try," he said at length, still looking out into the dull March daylight, and speaking, it seemed, more to himself, than to her,—“we keep everything around him as quiet, as possible. If anything does make a sudden noise, or if even the sound of our voices comes too abruptly on his ear,—some awful dread,—some awful,—I suppose,—remembrance, flash across him, for his dull, dreaming eyes start with terror, and he hides his face in his hands and cries pitifully,—then, he'll grope about to some corner, or come and cling to one of us. I tell you, Claire, we dare not let even a note of music, come to his ear, for we could not be certain of the consequences, it might . . .”

"Yes, Marc,—don't say it, though,—I know what you mean,"—broke in Claire, her voice trembling as she spoke,—“and yet — ?”

"That is what weighs upon me, day after day, hour after hour,"—he said,—under-

standing, without explanation, what was contained in that long, questioning "yet."—"But the trial is too great and doubtful a one to make,—at all events at present.—We dare not hazard an attempt, upon which so much depends,—when failure, rather than success seems in the balance. But—I must be off, Claire, for I'm late.—Promise me, though,—you will think over what I have asked you? It is only just for once, or twice, perhaps, before Liddon takes him away. It may arouse or soften, or do something towards helping back—life,—for, this kind of state in which he is, is not *life*, but—mere *existence*. All that forms actual living,—the working of the mind, the memory, the heart—are dormant;—they need to be, aye—they *must* be—*touched*."

"How can *I* touch?"—said she, not questioningly, but reflectively.

She meant to go,—she meant to do what she could. What Marc had said, and what the voice within her whispered, were quite sufficient, to make her cast all selfish scruples and shrinkings, on one side.

But,—what *could* she do? How could

she "touch?"—Surely, Marc must be thinking her abler and more capable than she was, if he thought that *she* could do anything in this matter.

Still,—she would try.

CHAPTER XLIII.

ABBEYSLEA LIBRARY.

THE library in Abbeyslea Rectory,—that long half-way-down furnished room, with its blockade of furniture and books up at the one end, its bareness and space down at the other,—had now lost to a great degree, that peculiarity of arrangement, which had once characterized it.

The whole, not *part* of the room was now in use. The chairs had been pushed downward; the piles of books which had stood, not only upon the shelves close by the fireplace, but had been crowded together upon the floor, or upon chairs,—were now occupying some of those empty shelves, that lined the walls of that lower part of the room, which had, before, been used only by the Rector as a pacing-ground.

The large writing-table no longer choked up one of the windows; it had been moved

out and downward, to the centre of the room, so that both windows were now unobstructed and easy of access. There were one or two other tables in the room also, now; there were illustrated papers and curious prints strewn about, in the place of pamphlets and Church literature. There were also pictures, —ornaments,—and odds and ends.

For, the Rector's library was no longer the sitting-room of a student, of a man living alone, ever busy with his thoughts and plans; ever intent upon the inner life, with little thought for outer appearance, or form. There was no longer, a one chair placed by the side of that writing-table, or a one man's form occasionally resting in an armchair. But there were several low chairs, and never less than two men now in the room. There were also several portraits,—portraits of beautiful women, fancy designs or otherwise; no longer was there only that one face,—a mother's—with its soft eyes and tender expression. The mother's face was there in its usual place on the writing table; but, there were other faces round it, other eyes looking out on the room, and

upon the occupants of the room. But, all the knick-knacks and possessions that were there, that had been brought out and placed about in various places, were what had once belonged to that mother. Treasures with sacred associations, belonging now to the son. They had remained separated from his other possessions until of late, because of their belonging to, and being peculiarly associated with, her.

But now, all was changed. The room in which Franz Humbert passed the greater part of every day, had to be a room wherein, to his right hand and to his left, lay attractions. Things upon which his eyes could rest. Things that might awaken thoughts within his mind. Things that his hands could handle and his fingers could touch. Things that his weakened senses might take a kind of pleasure or interest in. All those treasures that had once belonged to her, who had passed to her Rest, were still most precious to her son. But, they were spread out,—not sacredly kept and guarded. And, for a purpose. Every little thing that might help, every little sacrifice that might lead

forward, as well as all the greater things that could be done, and the greater sacrifices that might be made,—nothing should be spared. To resuscitate,—to revivify the life that he had unwittingly spoiled, was a primary object and aim in Ambrose Liddon's every thought and deed.

Yet up to the present, all efforts,—all tender kindnesses,—all daily, hourly patience,—all sweet and careful guardianship,—all absorbing attention,—seemed, apparently *were*, of no avail. “Who are you?—I don't know who you are,”—was the weak, repeated murmur, as the eye would wander restlessly over what came before it; or, would stop blank and stare at the form and face of the Rector,—his constant, patient, never-absent companion,—and not know him. Not know that it was he who had spoken to him, perhaps but a quarter of an hour before. “Don't leave me,—you are kind,—kind,”—was the pitiful cry, as the dark fear of something, seemed to lower down upon him. But, the cry came just the same to Dr. Sinclair, if he chanced to be in the room; the afflicted violinist was aware of no differ-

ence between them. The one who was with him by day and by night, was the same as the one he saw sometimes twice, sometimes three times, a day. There was something protecting in their presence, that was all; something that was different to cling to or to murmur to, than were the chairs or the tables around him.

Yet, though the mind remained in the same dull, inanimate state, the body—that had appeared so shrunken, so weakened, so changed,—began slowly to show signs of returning vigour. The form which had by that single night's panic, become so bent, and so incapable of quick movement or of conscious action; the limbs and flesh which had appeared as that belonging to an old, not to a young man,—began, by a healthy flow of blood, to assume again, to a small degree, somewhat of that youth and vitality, which they had lost. Ambrose Liddon viewed the gradual, though unmistakable, return of this natural beauty and strength, with thankful and tenderest interest. Gently he would help forward, what Nature was slowly giving back again; softly he would

persuade, delicately he would lead a little further day by day, in order that,—though the mind could not grasp or know of the change,—the body might, in itself, become aware and make use of, its greater powers.

“You do more to expand and aid nature, than even I,—with my physician’s knowledge and learning, could do,”—Dr. Sinclair had said, a few days before the complete change of air and scene were agreed upon,—“How can you think,—how can you devise,—how can you, as it were, intuitively know, exactly what is best, as you do?”

“Think,—how I have been the cause of this life being as it is now,”—the Rector had replied quietly,—“think what you would feel, what you would do,—if you were in my place. Yet,—no man can know until—nay, grant it may never be,—may you be spared the daily anguish, the unceasing torture of witnessing—what you, yourself, have stricken.—O my God,—I sometimes think the cross Thou hast laid on me, too heavy!—One of Thine own creatures, O Father,—one of those very ones I loved so well, whom I—by my own hand, by my own thoughtless-

ness, have blasted. Forgive me, forgive,—I knew it not,—O God, I knew it not—but Thou,—Thou knowest, aye, and Thou willest,—otherwise, it had not been.”

Still the human nature strove. Still the human heart cried out in its agony of remorse. But, it was only at times, that this bitterness of spirit returned. For the soul of the righteous man had been borne back again into the keeping of its Father. The will, subdued and sanctified, had been yielded again to the Higher Will. The soul that had striven, murmured and denied,—in its utter darkness,—Omnipotent Wisdom and Love, had flown back grieved and penitent, to the shadow of the Omnipotent Wing.—Ambrose Liddon had emerged from the thick, dark cloud, that had covered, and threatened to crush him.

—The evening of the day on which Dr. Sinclair had expressed to his sister the wish he had, that she should accompany him to the Rectory,—found the Rector and his silent, dreamy companion, engaged in an occupation which was a very usual one with them at this time of the day. It was varied

always a little by the skilful guiding of the one, but monotonized always in a way by the other, in the irrecognition of that variance.

They were making a tour of inspection round the room. The violinist's arm was passively lying in the Rector's; he was being guided along,—not unwillingly, not forcibly,—but with a certain docile inattention, which characterized his every movement and action.

“Look, Franz, look,”—the Rector was saying, letting a musical and slow utterance, sound in the violinist's ear,—as he pointed to a curious and beautiful picture, which he had only that day found, and brought into the library,—“this is all white and gold, Franz,—a dream, you love a dream,—see, here is a dream face;—do not touch, Franz,—but look,—look.”

“Kind, very kind,”—murmured his companion, bringing the hand that was half stretched out before him, slowly back to hang listlessly by his side again,—“but I don't know who you are.”

He turned his head slowly, and looked from the picture upon which his dull eyes

had rested, to the face,—the tired, worn face—of the man upon whom he was leaning.

“ See,—she has golden hair, Franz,—and wings, shining like gold,”—said the Rector again, not raising his voice, but bringing a kind of surprise into it, to arrest the attention of his hearer,—“ and her eyes, Franz,—see, they are as blue, as blue as a summer’s sky,—aye, bluer,—tell me, aren’t they bluer? ”

“ Brown,—soft brown,”—said the violinist, taking half a step closer to the picture, which was leaning against the back of a chair.

A breath of hope stirred within the Rector’s breast. But,—how often it was just stirred, and that was all.

“ Who are you? ”—mumbled the same voice, almost petulantly.

The scarcely formed desire to see,—to look, which for a moment had seemed to impel that movement forward,—was gone. The blank eyes were again resting on the Rector’s face.

There was no clock in the room; there had not been one for a long time now. Ever since that first day, when Dr. Sinclair had

brought the stricken man downstairs, and laid him in a low chair by the library fire, had that library been without its clock. For, on that day, something in the tone of its rather sonorous strike, had brought a burst of tears and exclamations of terror, from the once-lover of sweet sounds; and, with haste, the clock had been removed. All sounds, except the subdued murmur of a voice, had from henceforth been carefully guarded from him.

“He will be coming soon,”—thought the Rector, referring to Dr. Sinclair,—“but I wonder whether he will do, as he said he would this morning.

“Touch, Franz,—touch,”—he said aloud, laying in his listless hand, a soft and silky substance, which clung to the fingers, as they came in contact with it,—“so soft, so warm, and all gold again,—see, you may press it, and feel it closer still.”

The nerveless fingers folded over the golden web of silk, and then unclosed again; and the eyes, for a moment, were bent down, as though looking at it.

“Flaxen,—I’ve touched it—”

Again, the Rector's heart leapt. "Flaxen,"—what was he thinking of,—when had he touched it?—Was there a memory dawning?

"Don't leave me, don't,—*don't*."

Ah!—pitiful! If any slightest memory did dawn,—if any smallest vapour of a recollection was brought to him,—it was wrought with fear. Tender as the dreamy sensation was, of touching—what?—was it children's soft, flaxen hair?—sweet and soothing as the knowledge might have been, it was gone even in its first breathing. There was something, as it were, possessing it, something enveloping it—Fear.

So gently was the front door of Abbeyslea Rectory opened, so subdued was the tread in the now druggeted hall, that though the Rector, himself, just heard the sound, his companion, now clinging to him, did not seem to notice it.

"Let us sit down,—you are tired,"—Ambrose Liddon said, guiding the clinging form to a chair.

"Yes,—tired,"—mumbled the voice, repeating the words, but not much conscious, perhaps, of what they meant.

It was best to sit down near a table, upon which was something that might attract, or might be touched; otherwise, the violinist would sink into a state of more complete absorption and apathy, than before. Therefore the Rector led him to his central writing table, which was the largest in the room; and, upon which stood more objects than elsewhere.

“Take off your hat and jacket, Claire,”—Dr. Sinclair was saying to his sister, in the hall,—“and go in and speak to him and let him see you,—just as he used to come in and find you, when we and he lived next door to each other.”

“But, Marc,—Marc, what shall I say,—what shall I do?”—said she, losing all assurance, and feeling far more ready to turn and fly back home, than to make the entrance into that room.

“Claire,”—said her brother gravely,—“a true woman is tender,—loving,—compassionate,—you will not ask me what to say or do, when once you are inside. Go,—I will follow soon;—Liddon knows you’re coming.”

The steady gaze of his eyes, and the inspiring tone of his voice, reassured her.

“Come soon, Marc,”—she said, softly turning the handle of the door.

And this was all she said, though her lips were trembling, her eyes dazed and dim, and her heart thumping in great, irregular beats.

“Brave little sister,”—said Marcus Sinclair, closing the door noiselessly after her,—“It is a hard thing that I have asked her to do, but—”

He paced restlessly up and down. *It was* a hard thing, but his sister had a tender woman’s heart, therefore —

“‘She has power to heal, to redeem,’—quoted he,—‘to heal in the touch of her hand, in the tenderness of her voice,—by the love in her eyes.’ Ah!—surely it is right to make this trial,—the power within them, *if* they use it,—is so great.”

Only ten minutes passed by, while Dr. Sinclair was pacing noiselessly up and down, thinking, —questioning,—harassing,—himself, as to whether he had done, or was

doing, what was for the best, — what would be of any avail.

Then,—he could stand the suspense no longer. He unlatched the door, and went in.

They were sitting close together, the violinist and Sinclair's sister.

The head of the violinist with its long, snow-white hair, was partially raised; it looked as though it were thus lifted from its usual position of hanging down, with the intent of listening.

Claire was speaking.

“What have you been doing all day?”—she was saying, bending her head so close to his, that her brown hair was almost touching his white locks,—“I want to know, because I'm coming to see you to-morrow again, if you tell me what you do,—and when you would like me to come.”

“Brown,—soft brown eyes, I knew they were brown, not—not blue,” murmured he, and there was a faint gleam of light in his dull orbs, as he looked at her,—“Touch

my hand,"—he added, looking down at one of his own hands, but not moving it.

"See,—I will stroke it,—stroke it again and again,"—she said tenderly, taking one listless hand and stroking it gently up and down with her fingers,—“but it's thin,—so thin,—do you think I can make it stronger, if I stroke it.”

“Stroke it,”—he said, again raising his head and looking at her,—“it's soft,—soft.—Who are you?—Speak again, I've . . .”

What—? He couldn't remember what. The memory that seemed to be coming, didn't come. He was gazing helplessly at her, with his lips slightly apart. He was waiting,—listening. But, there was no smile on the face, and the light in the eyes was fading.

“Feel if my hand is soft on your face,”—she said, putting back one of the locks of white hair which had fallen over his forehead, and then passing her hand slowly and delicately down first one wizened cheek, and then the other,—“Shall I come again to-morrow? I'll come if you'll talk to me,—I'm tired now.”

"Tired—? tired —?" said he, raising his head still higher, and the light dawning again in his eyes, "if you're tired, lean back and I'll . . ."

"You talk to me," she said, closing her eyes, "while I rest."

"I'll look,—look at you, while . . ."

A blank pause.

Claire kept her eyes closed, and still leant back.

"Who *are* you?"

It was the same old question, but the voice in which it was spoken, was completely changed. There was interest,—desire in it; before—,the question had always been murmured,—mumbled over, without expression, without interrogation in it.

Claire opened her eyes, and saw that the violinist had moved of his own accord,—had risen from his seat, and was stooping over her.

"Shall I come to-morrow, again?"—she said, rising and taking both his cold, nerveless hands in her soft, warm ones, while the whole tenderness and depth of her soul seemed to shine from her eyes.

Slowly as she looked at him, the passive fixture of his features seemed to change; the small, uncertain light that had been in his eyes only, appeared gradually to pass all over the face. And the lips parted again,—not with listening intentness,—but with a faint, flickering smile.

“*Beautiful!*”—he said.

He was speaking, not murmuring; he was looking, not dreaming; he was living, not existing,—just at that moment.

The Rector drew near.

“Franz,”—he said, letting his voice drop very gently on his ear,—“Shall she come and see you again to-morrow?”

“Yes,—to-morrow,”—said the violinist rapidly,—eagerly,—“but—”

He took two uncertain steps, towards where the Rector stood.

“Don’t,—don’t *you* leave me,”—he said entreatingly,—“I know you,—you are kind.”

Then, Dr. Sinclair took his sister away, and left the Rector and his charge alone again.

That night, Franz Humbert clung to Ambrose Liddon, as he had never had con-

sciousness to do before. No lasting, distant memory was restored to him ; no recollection passing beyond that fatal night, was brought back to him. But, he became intently aware that the spare, thin figure, whose every movement he now followed, and the strong, tender face, whose every expression he now watched, —were the form and the face of some kind friend, who had been with him for a long time, and who loved and cared for him better than anyone else.

“I *know* you.”

As far as any knowledge was, as yet, given him, he *did* know the gentle, patient, all-wise guardian ; and with the knowledge came the ability to respond to and take interest in, —though still to a limited degree, —what that guardian put forward for his help and his guidance. Day by day, some permanent and visible advance was made. Day by day, the Rector's step grew lighter, and his face lost some of its worn, strained expression ; while higher and higher he lifted his heart, with humblest yet meetest thanksgiving to Him, by Whom alone the change was being wrought.

Claire came again several times, before the move from Abbeyslea of the Rector and his charge was effected. She did not see or recognise herself, that she had done much, or did much. She had been the means,—by some chance accident, she held it,—of awakening the mind of the afflicted violinist, to a sense of the all-absorbing care and attention of the Rector,—and this was something, nay,—a great thing. But anyone else, any other woman, could have done it as well, probably better than she could.

But,—as the Rector watched the gentle grace of her movements, as he listened to the sweet tenderness of her voice, as he saw the delicate thought and womanly method and power in all her ways, and as he raised his eyes and looked into the purity and truth of her face,—he thought that there could only just be *one* woman here and there, who could do what she had done, or what she, in life, would be capable of doing.

CHAPTER XLIV.

“ I *MUST* BE LOVED.”

“ CLAUDE,—if you can’t manage to get some colour in your cheeks,—you’ll have to go in for painting, or else—”

“ Well, Marc,—what else?—I wouldn’t *rouge*, even if you told me to a hundred times! And what a slur, too, it would be upon your doctor’s wisdom, if I had to take to that! What’s your other proposition?—A more sensible one, I hope. If it’s to go in, though, for any more of your nasty medicines,—I shall refuse point-blank.”

“ Or else . . . ” repeated he, and then stopped again, simply for the sake of teasing her.

He knew quite well what he was going to propose. He had already turned it well over in his mind. He had already, before beginning to mention it, begun to make arrangements for it. Therefore, his hesitation was but feigned.

"What do *you* think will be the best?" he asked, anxious to find out what her method would be, for regaining the health and strength, that had been sadly failing, of late.

"I don't know," she replied languidly, "just be quiet, or—go to sleep for a year and a day, and wake up again."

"Very nice plan, indeed,—it's almost as good as saying; though,—that you're tired to death of my society, and would like, at least, to be free from it for that period.—You're not polite, Claire, but—as you're out of sorts, I suppose I must forgive you."

"O Marc,—don't tease," she said, putting her hand to her head, "you see, I don't really know much what I am saying, I feel so stupid. But,—I shall be all right again soon,—it's beginning to get rather hot, and heat doesn't always suit me."

"And so, you think if I let you go on like this, while every day is getting hotter, that I shall be taking good care of you," said he, with gentle irony.

"No,—I don't know what I think,—only I wish you wouldn't fuss about me, because . . . "

"Very well, then, I won't fuss, or bother

my head about you any more. I shall go away and take a holiday myself, and leave you here alone, to sleep for a fortnight and a day. Will that suit you ? ”

“ Are you *really* going to take a holiday, Marc ? ” asked she incredulously.

He often talked of one, he often referred to the necessity of taking one ; but upon this point, his talking always came to nothing. When he spoke of a ‘ holiday,’ he spoke of something that was never coming off. Hence, though Claire detected a ring of determination in his voice, she could not feel sure that he was not, as usual, speaking of one of these ‘ castles in the air.’

“ Yes, Claire, I’m *really* going to take a holiday,” answered he, accenting his words, in the same way as she did,—then, more gravely, “ I believe we shall be able to start off, in about ten days’ time, and . . . ”

“ How *will* you be able to arrange, Marc ? ” interrupted she, rousing herself sufficiently to banter him, “ how *can* such an important person be spared ? Who *will* undertake the responsibility of filling your place, while you are away ? It’s impossible ! ”

"You're getting better already, Claire,—so I can't be spared, and we won't go away," said he, heaving a sigh of disappointment.

"Marc,—how silly you are ! I shan't say a word, or make a remark, or—even stay in the same room with you,—if you won't tell me where you are going,—and how you're going to manage, and what we're going to do, and oh !—a lot of other things."

"One at a time, Claire," said her brother, laughing, "but first,—I should like to ask you, where *you* would like to go, and what *you* will do ? Supposing, for instance, that I couldn't make up my mind, and was ill and pale, and always tired like you are,—what kind of change of scene, would you recommend ?"

"Oh ! I don't know, Marc,—what's the good of asking me ?" she said, leaning back in her chair, and closing her eyes, "I'm too tired to think,—or to talk,—or to do anything, except listen."

"Well then, there's no place you would like to go to, particularly ?" asked he.

She didn't answer for a moment, and then only gave an evasive reply.

"I don't know many places, Marc, so I can't have any special liking,—only, let's go somewhere where it's quiet, and where there's nothing to do but sit and dream, and dream and sleep and dream and . . . "

"Claire,—if you've got to that stage, I certainly will do all the talking, and you only the listening,"—said he, thinking to himself that it was indeed time, to be getting her off somewhere,—“Well now,”—really coming to the point at last,—“what do you think about joining our friends up at Strathling,—that would be quiet enough, wouldn't it?—right up in the hills, only a few cottages about, and . . . ”

“O Marc, how nice!—you've thought of just what . . . ”

“I've only been thinking of myself, Claire,” he interrupted, busily turning over his papers, and not looking at the two bright spots of colour that had suddenly come to her cheeks.—“I want to see old Franz again,—he's wonderfully better, Liddon says,—quite strong bodily, and indeed marvelously more like himself, in every way.—And I want to see and talk to Liddon again,

—there are some of the arrangements in his special quarters in Rich Lane, coming to a hash,—and nothing can be put quite right or settled, without consulting him. Letter writing does for certain purposes, but not for all. So, you see, little sister,—it's only for my own convenience and pleasure, and to carry out my own wishes and plans, that we are really going to get a holiday now. *You* have only just to come with me, and drink in the mountain air, and sleep and dream, and dream and . . . ”

“ I shan't want to sleep, if we go *there*, Marc,” broke in Claire, rather indignantly,—then added, with some confusion, “ I shall be so busy talking to Franz, that there'll be no time for dreaming, except at night as usual.”

“ Of course, of course,” said her brother ; but he did not know exactly what he meant by his ‘ of course.’

There was a great deal to arrange and see to, before he could leave. He had now no longer only his ordinary physician's work, to occupy his mind and to fill his time. The misanthrope was fast engendering philanthropic notions. The cynic was less morose,

and the morose was less cynical. The epithets that had been applied to him, would in time be questioned, as to wherein their truth had lain.

“If you would be happy, first seek God, and then the welfare of your fellow-men,” Ambrose Liddon had said one day, stating it as a fact beyond dispute; speaking of it not as an idle theory, but as a practical reality.

Dr. Sinclair had said little,—had asked little further at the time; but, he had thought much. Was egotism the root of all unhappiness? Nay,—the priest of God would have said, that ungodliness lay at the root of all misery. But,—egotism *is* ungodliness; to be an egotist is to be ungodlike; therefore egotism is a phase in ungodliness. Was it true then, absolutely,—imperatively true that —

“The most miserable of men, is he who is always thinking of himself, always speaking of himself, always living for himself; looking out for slights done to himself, and judging everything in reference to himself?”

Marcus Sinclair had read these words, once,—twice,—several times in his life; but, he had scouted at them,—not perhaps in the innermost depths of his heart, but in his own mind. "If Self could be fulfilled with Self,—if all its self ideas could be satisfied,—if Self could be swamped in Self, then . . . ah! then,—what? Happiness? Nay, rather rankling bitterness of spirit, and endless discontent.

Sinclair had proved it. Though he had had one love,—one care,—one *thing* outside his self-absorption,—yet, even this had often been considered as to what it was, or what it did, in reference to himself. Aye, he had indeed, proved the very truth of what he had scoffed at. For,—what had been his life, before he came across the man who, by his every word and act, showed that he had no self that was not merged first in God, and then in his fellow-brethren? What had been his state of existence, until he witnessed and entered somewhat into the agony of the man, who *could not* live without the Light of his God's Countenance upon him; and who sought with strong strivings and earnest-

ness of prayers, until the cloud of darkness was dispersed? What had been his knowledge, his enlightenment, until he heard that cry coming from the priest's lips —

“My people!—what can I do, what can I exist in, without my people? . . . How can I live when I have hurt and marred one of Thy creature's lives, my God? How can I enter into no life, save into this one life only? Must I leave those others,—must they be forsaken? O God,—give them another heart to love, and care, and pray for them as—nay,—better than I could, than even now I would, if—Father, if it were Thy Will?”

What had been his guilty condemnation of his fellow-man, until he listened to that, almost, stern rebuke —

“What God has made, call not thou wholly bad, or wholly unmeet. The Creator is Judge of the creature,—not the creature of the creature. Think not thy life's duty lies in condemning man,—thou art fitted for higher duties than this. Lift him up,—raise him,—live for him; tread him not down, lest in the treading, thou, thyself, be trodden under foot. . . .”

It was enough,—Ambrose Liddon had touched springs hidden in the nature of that fellow-man, who had seen him and been with him, not during his time of greatest strength and power, but even during the period of his weakness. For, what had become as a second nature,—nay, rather, what was now the nature of the man of God,—could not even when clouded, wholly unmake or deny itself. Even through gloom, the beauty and nobility of the priest's nature, shone and dazzled the eyes of one, who had not come across true beauty, or true nobility before. The mystery of God shining in man, of God working through man,—even at a time when that power was not manifested as it sometimes was, because of the stumbling faith,—was seen as a mystery, before which the onlooker would fain had veiled his face.

And so it was, that Marcus Sinclair entered into the fellowship of those few out of the world's millions, that find life's happiness fulfilled in serving God, and in seeking the happiness of those around them.

The health of Dr. Sinclair's sister, had

been failing for many weeks. Sometimes, her brother half-blamed himself, for having persuaded her to make that effort,—a very great effort,—to see and speak to one whom she had known so well, and over whom so terrible a change had passed. He thought afterwards,—when the Rector and his charge had left Abbeyslea,—that perhaps his, Marcus's, great anxiety for his friend, had outweighed his judicious action, in reference to his sister. Her pale looks, languid manner, and more than all, perhaps, the ever-watching, waiting look that seemed to trouble the softness of her eyes, made him fear that he had not carefully enough considered, the delicate susceptibility of her nature. What he, with his man's power and stronger organism was able fully to bear, might have come—however gently prepared,—as too great a shock to her. The old man's face with its set features, its clouded eyes, surrounded by its snow-white locks, might be haunting the vision that had, so little while ago, had before it a face of so different an appearance, and with so different surroundings. It might be so,—and yet —

"What are you looking for,—what are you wanting, Claire?" he asked one evening when, unbeknown to her, while he was supposed to be engrossed in his paper, he had watched the eyes, that would not rest upon the needlework the fingers were doing,—the eyes that would travel round and round the room, and hungrily stop awhile at the door, watching,—waiting—desiring for something.

"Nothing, nothing, Marc," she had only said, starting and shivering when he spoke.

But that 'nothing' was hiding something; and, he knew it. The sister who had once asked him to unload all his heart to her, to keep nothing back,—had now a secret of her own, which she would not let him share.

"Claire,—that's the first story, you have ever told me," he said with gentle reproof.

"Marc,—love me,—love me!" she cried, throwing down her work, and with flushed face and trembling lips, half-kneeling, half-crouching by his side, "*I must be loved, I must,—I cannot live if I am not loved.*"

But it was not *his* love, that she wanted. The woman's heart within her, was hungering after something more, than the brother's

love. The cry of—"love me" was not addressed to him; it was no brother's love, or devotion, she was petitioning for. She had that already,—had it to a far greater degree, than most sisters have. But, it was not enough. The deepest emotions, the most absorbing and passionate desires for another love, had been stirred within her, and—unsatisfied, unresponded to—were, in their intensity, eating into her very soul.

"I cannot live, if I am not loved."

Thus it was, that Dr. Sinclair decided, that he must take her away from Abbeyslea.

CHAPTER XLV.

JAMES ISLAY.

“BEATRICE,—tell me again precisely how it happened.”

“I have already repeated it over many times, Father,—what more can you want? I can tell you nothing further than what I have told you,—can add nothing to it. Besides,—what is there so very remarkable in it, except that it was a strange concurrence of events?”

“But I wish to hear about it again,—so, if you have no objection, please gratify me and not yourself in this matter.”

It was the same repellent tone, the same insisting manner; but the voice was weaker, the utterance slower, the gesture of impatience less emphatic.

Through the skill and efforts of Dr. Sinclair, the life of James Islay of Islay Court, had been, humanly speaking, saved. By

the strange—as Beatrice called it—concurrency of events, which had brought the former back to his own home, for a very different purpose than that of conferring a favour and a benefit upon the latter,—the prolongation of the latter's life had been obtained. It would never be the same wiry, healthy life, that it was before that illness, that delirium, that trembling upon the borders of the grave; but, life upon earth,—the whole desire, the whole coveting of this avaricious, hard, earth-bound nature,—had been again placed before it. That there could be any happiness, any sense of satisfaction or peace, in the prolonged possession of this—gift—life, used and lived as this life was,—is an axiom with too strong a negative affixed to it, to call forth any reference, or comment. The selfish, narrow, irreligious, unloving, and unbeloved life, is in itself a witness, to its own cankering misery,—its own consuming wretchedness. It is already, even in this life, like to a spirit wandering up and down, to and fro upon the earth, who seeks rest, and finds—none.

—It was about eight months after that ill-

ness, which had so nearly terminated the life of James Islay, that he and his eldest daughter, were sitting in the large and luxurious drawing-room of Islay Court. They were conversing upon a topic, which was evidently not a new one; they were referring to an event, or to events, which were evidently more pleasing to the one to listen to, than for the other to relate. Briefly,—the subject of conversation was none other, than that of James Islay's disinherited son, Marcus Sinclair; the event referred to, was none other than that strange coincidence, of the latter's appearance at Islay Court, just at the time when his father's last hours were—to all semblance—numbered.

Though James Islay had been in the maddest, fearfulest delirium, during the first of those several hours that his son, as physician, had spent in his room; though, apparently, there was not the least sign of recognition, or of notice, taken by that fevered brain, of the presence of that son; and though for many weeks after, in the prostration of weakness, no word, no expression escaped James Islay's lips, indicative of

a certain knowledge of a certain growing conviction,—still, there the conviction was. And, after awhile, this conviction was brought to light, and insisted upon as being, not only an idea, a hypothesis, a—possibly erroneous impression, but—a fact, indisputable, unalterable.

“I tell you, Beatrice,—that Marcus was in my room and at my bedside. I tell you that it was his hand that touched me, and his voice that spoke.—How came he there?”

This was the assertion of the fact. There could be no attempt made, to deny it;—it would have been useless. James Islay was not the man to be contradicted. Besides, at the end of the statements he made, a question had been asked. That question had to be answered. Nothing could be gained by substituting a false explanation for a true one; for, James Islay was already perfectly aware, and had been, before the increase of his illness, of Lambert's intention of bringing Claire to Islay Court. Therefore, Beatrice had answered the sudden question put,—with all brevity and evident dislike to the subject, but—truly.

Marcus's presence there had been the outcome of no previous arrangement; the exercise of his skill upon his father, had been purely self-imposed; and his coming to fetch Claire away, in the way and at the time he did,—might not have had underlying it, any double motive. Beatrice, herself, was not high-minded or impartial enough, not to bring forward doubts upon this last clause; she preferred either from policy, or from a certain belief in the necessary existence of some sinister purpose, to impart to her father's mind, her own ideas and suppositions upon it.

But her policy,—if policy it were—had been scattered to the winds, by another, quickly following, question.

“Did Marcus come to my room for the purpose of hastening my end, or for the purpose of prolonging my life?”—her father asked.

Yet, though Beatrice, for motives of her own, hesitated and glossed over the plain answer to this demand, James Islay,—desiring to know, and always being in the habit of having his desires attended to,—took

means to discover, what his daughter preferred keeping him in ignorance of. From his attendant physicians, and also from those special ones, whose services had been secured during the time when his life was despaired of, James Islay learnt, that it was due to Dr. Sinclair's extraordinary skill and power *alone*, that he was now a living and not a dead man. And, thus, in becoming aware of this, Beatrice and—perhaps—his own wishes, to attribute to Marcus's presence at Islay Court, a double purpose,—fell through. James Islay's disinherited son would not have exercised his skill to prolong and save the life of his father, if he had come to Islay Court for the object of, by foul means, obtaining the inheritance, from which legally he had been cut off. Marcus Sinclair Islay would not have *voluntarily* given, what would best have served him to withhold; neither would he have consciously done, what would defeat his own ends in the doing.

Even the hard, narrow-minded, one-sided old lawyer could not, with all his sharp logic, argue contrary to this. Certainly,—he could bring forward one point, favouring his old

own belief,—the twin to Lambert's belief,—‘that no man does anything, takes any trouble, or makes any sacrifice, except for his own good, and to further his own ends ;’—but, that was all. He could say that his son wished, by the service he rendered, to dispel his father's displeasure, and to win back his rightful position as son, and heir to his father's property. But the point,—the supposition, was a weak one. Dr. Sinclair would not have disappeared again as suddenly as he had come, making no attempt to follow up what might prove for his own good, if that good had been his object or his end.

Thus, unwillingly and grudgingly, James Islay had to acknowledge to himself, that his son's mode of procedure, had been wholly enigmatical ; and, it was the consciousness of this inability to account for it, that made him, time after time, drag from Beatrice the repetition of what had ensued, during the hours when his delirium had been at its height and when,—notwithstanding the curse that was upon his head,—his son had entered the house and, of his own free will, had con-

ferred a benefit upon the master of the house.

The dislike which Beatrice had, to the narration of what had then happened, was not alone accounted for, by her disapproval of her brother's name even,—he having been cast off—being mentioned. Neither could it be accounted for entirely, by her fear that her father might, by dwelling upon the event, come to reconsider his sworn determination of years ago. These thoughts concerned and harassed her to a certain degree, but they were not *the* reason why her heart turned sick, whenever the subject was broached, or whenever the causes of what had been, were inquired into.

In relating the conversation which took place between father and daughter, upon this particular afternoon, in the Islay Court drawing-room, it will almost immediately be seen, wherein Beatrice's primer reason for disliking this topic, lay.

Concurring with her father's demand—which was law,—she had, without further demur, recounted again what had taken place upon that November day, now rather

over eight months ago. And, as usual, after the dry, monotonous, never varying, relation of it,—James Islay allowed several minutes to elapse, before he made any remark, asked any further question, or gave any idea that he had heard or paid attention, to what had just been told him.

At length, however, he broke out, with exactly the same words that always came to his lips, after this customary prolonged pause.

“That scoundrel Lambert!” he exclaimed, biting out the words from between his thin lips, “all through him,—through him, Beatrice,—from beginning to end.”

“So you always say, Father,” remarked Beatrice, with something like impatience in her calm, cold tones,—“I’m tired of hearing it.”

“An idle, scheming, good-for-nothing,” went on James Islay, his weak, rasping voice trembling, “with his cool, double-dyed tongue, his—impudence,—his . . .”

“It is strange you didn’t find all this out, before your illness,” Beatrice put in, while he sought for words in which to express him-

self. "You thought well enough about him then."

This was the shaft that his daughter took a particular pleasure in thrusting in, every time her father broke out against Lambert. It was about the only one she could bring to bear upon him. The fact of this change of his, was too undeniable for him to dispute; therefore, she dared to refer to it, dared also to repeat and play with it, whenever occasion demanded.

It was unfortunately always a means of still further arousing his wrath; for, it wasn't likely that he would openly acknowledge himself to have been duped by Lambert all these years; neither was it likely that matters would be, in any way improved, by the fact of this being thrown in his face. It is hard for a good man, even, to acknowledge himself to have been mistaken; but, it is quite impossible for a bad man to do so.

Therefore, Beatrice, instead of fighting for Lambert, was deliberately fighting against him. She was taking the unwisest course that she could. It would have been far better policy, with a nature like her father's,

for her to have agreed with him in what he said, and gone—even a few steps further on in the same direction; he would then have retreated back, for the sake of contradiction and argument. As it was, however, he took refuge in one of his cutting satires.

“Pretty,—very pretty, Beatrice,” he said, his mouth curling with scorn.—“A woman’s logic is *so* deep, her wisdom *so* wise. It’s a pity we’re not all women,—nothing would ever go wrong then,—nothing,—O no;—you’d have no Lamberts,—no Lamberts, no,—not even for you, Beatrice!”

She made no reply.

Her father laughed that harsh, grating laugh, which was such a mockery of a laugh. If Beatrice knew the weak point in him to drive at, he knew of one in her, equally assailable, equally unprotected.

“You wouldn’t stick by him, Beatrice,—would you?” he went on, with sneering contempt, “you wouldn’t let him drag you down to any low level, as long as—as long as . . . you are not as young as you were, Beatrice, are you?—The money is not as sure as it was,—I’m not dying now;—it’s

not just dropping into your hands,—you can't buy him, and . . .”

Beatrice rose.

“I do not sit here to be insulted,” she said, white to the lips and trembling in every limb, from the sting of his words.

“No,—but, you'll remain here, until I've done with you,” said he, with that tyrant's power, that she had never yet dared to disobey, “I have work for you to do this afternoon.—You'll not leave till that's done.”

She sat down again.

“Why you should anathematize Lambert, whenever you apparently wish to know more about Marcus,—I don't know,” she said, hoping to bring back the conversation to a less disagreeable theme, “You ask me about Marcus, and then—no sooner do I gratify this wish of yours, than you pay no heed to the subject you pretend to take an interest in, but . . .”

“Thanks,—thanks, you needn't dictate to me,” broke in he, waving his hand weakly, as if to stop the flow of her words,—“My logic's not *your* logic,—what I see, *you* don't see. You're only—a woman.”

A mean reminder; an unmanly thrust: but, James Islay, though a gentleman by birth, was not a gentleman either in thought or speech.

Beatrice was silent. She was used to her father's outbursts of wrath and satire. She was partially proof against his shafts; what she had been used to all her life, did not come to her with the same poignant force, that it would have if it had been of any unusual occurrence. She never learnt to be any wiser in her retaliations. Retaliate she had to, as she knew of nothing more effectual to deal in: mere silence on her part, would only have doubled her father's irritation.

"I tell you, Lambert has been the cause of all this—annoyance," he went on, quickening his tones, as he drew near to the conviction, which rankled most sorely, "If it wasn't for him,—the scoundrel,—the trickster,—the wily fop,—if it wasn't for him, I say, I shouldn't be under,—under this *detestable* obligation to—to Marcus. I . . . I . . ."

"You're harping upon that old idea, Father," remarked Beatrice, while the old man was chewing the cud of this bitter reflec-

tion, "it's quite an exaggerated notion that you are, in any way, indebted to . . ."

"Indebted?—Yes, yes, I am. I owe my life to him,—they all say so,—they swear to it,"—broke in he again,—“and it's all through that fool, Lambert. It was *he* who brought me to death's door,—it was *he* who worried my very breath away,—it was *he* who with his cool impudence and insufferable designs made me,—made me,—brought me to the pitch, I was. It was he,—*he*, I tell you, Beatrice, that has put me under this—obligation. Ugh — !”

“Well,—if you like to be extreme, and hold yourself—*indebted* to Marcus,” she said in tones which conveyed, that what annoyed him, was not of the slightest interest or concern to her, “why don't you just send him a handsome fee, for his trouble and skill, and so relieve yourself of the burden of this debt,—if you will insist upon considering it in that light?”

She had hinted at this method of procedure, before. The debt,—if her father *would* consider it a debt,—could be paid in pounds, shillings and pence. When that was done,

the sting of being under an obligation, would be removed.

“Hah!—likely, likely,” said the old man, affecting to disdain her suggestion; though, all the time it was one quite after his own heart, and one which he had already half made up his mind to carry out.—“Send it to his chemist’s shop, I suppose, his . . .”

“The chemist’s shop has got hold of some strong chemicals, or *you* wouldn’t be talking of it now,” interrupted Beatrice with some severity.

She wasn’t just, or particularly inclined to like fair play; but, she took pleasure in catching up her father, when opportunity offered. She was anxious, too, to keep his thoughts upon this means of releasing himself, from the debt he had unwittingly incurred. It was the easiest plan for relieving himself; and, even if Marcus were too proud to accept what was, practically, an insult to him,—that was his concern, not theirs.

She had feared, at one time, that her father would have wished, to make a further advance than this; that he would have inclined,—after the benefit conferred upon him

by his disinherited son,—to have broken his vow concerning him, and to have received him back into his favour. But, no; if such a thought, such a wish as this, had stirred within the breast of the flint-hearted old man, it had been, in all probability, immediately driven out with inexorable determination. He who had wronged and disobeyed once, should by no means, by no efforts, by no—even obligations, be forgiven, or received back into favour. James Islay's glimpse into the Valley of the Shadow of Death, had effected no softening change upon him.

"Take your pen, and write to him, Beatrice," said he, after a little further conversation and beating about the bush, during which he had half-disclosed a further design he had, in reference to the paying off this debt.

"It is more a clerk's business than mine," Beatrice said, with some reluctance.

"Tut, tut," answered the old man irritably, "clerk's indeed? no, no, it's short,—too short even for a clerk. Write, Beatrice,—d'you hear,—no delay, no delay,—I *will* have it done now."

“What am I to write?” asked she shortly, going over towards the *escritoire*.

“Write?—it’s very short, very short,” chuckled he, his face contorting with its kind of demon’s pleasure. “Write—‘*James Islay, Esqre., requires the presence of Dr. Sinclair at Islay Court at his earliest convenience.*’—That’ll do, that’ll do, Beatrice,—nicely,—nicely.”

She turned towards him.

“What’s the meaning of this, Father?” she asked, only a dim idea of what he meant by it, dawning upon her.

“Meaning?”—said he, rubbing his hands together. “Ha! you’re too dull to see, are you, Beatrice? Plain enough though,—did you think I was going to write him out a cheque and send it to him when—when I can doubly spurn him by summoning him here, and doling out to him in notes and hard cash,—with my own hand,—yes, with my own hand, Beatrice,—and *pay* him, pay him as I would a servant,—pay him for his drugs and skill and precious time,—pay him out a thousand pounds, for having prolonged my life,—hah! I’ll crush his pride,—I’ll show

him that what I say, I'll *never* alter,—what . . . ”

“He's too proud, Father,—he'll never accept it,” put in Beatrice, while she addressed and sealed the envelope.

“Proud ?—is he proud still ? ” said the old man with fierce glee. “ I'll make him lick the dust then ! He'll come, Beatrice,—he'll think I want to effect a reconciliation,—he'll think that act of his, has gained him his son's inheritance, but——but, he'll soon find out his mistake, he'll . . . ”

James Islay was too pleased with his design, to further express himself in words. He spent the rest of that afternoon, and many days following it, in exulting over the probable issue of his method, of freeing himself from this obligation to his son.

CHAPTER XLVI.

TOO GOOD—TO LOVE?

A FORTNIGHT had passed, and Marcus Sinclair and his sister, had found their way up to the hills and solitudes of Strathling.

The welcome they received there, far surpassed their expectations; for, it was a welcome given them, not by one of their friends only, but by both.

Ambrose Liddon had been, perhaps, rather sparing in his accounts of the very apparent improvement, that was being wrought in the condition of the violinist. Perhaps, he had not liked to be too sanguine; or, perhaps, the change for the better—so marked to those who had not been witnessing its gradual steps—was not so plainly seen by him, whose eyes watched the little, almost invisible, improvement, day by day and hour by hour; or—thirdly, perhaps, the very arrival of the new comers and, thus, of the

old, connecting ties, was the means of promoting an even greater start forward, than before. But, whatever it was, both Dr. Sinclair and his sister were agreeably surprised to find, far more than they had dared to anticipate.

The old man,—tottering, weak, childishly docile and powerless, the man that had once been the springing, agile Franz Humbert,—was again something of what he used to be. True,—the hair, that had once been yellow, was white—still white as driven snow; the face, once so unlined and fresh coloured, was still pallid and marked by an impress which, perhaps, would never quite leave it—the impress of an awful fear; the form, once so upright and active, so strangely susceptible to all manner of movement and gesture, was still a little bent and stooping, still—at times when the mind became clouded,—inclined to move slowly and carefully, as though uncertain of its powers. But,—for all this, the Franz Humbert they found at Strathling, was more like the erratic, yellow-haired Franz Humbert of seven months ago, than

he was to the passive, mindless, old man, that they had known in the library of Abbeyslea Rectory.

There had been eagerness, delight, portrayed on their arrival.

“Come, come,—I know you,” he had exclaimed, shaking hands with them excitedly, —“we’ve met before haven’t we? Yes, yes, I know we have,—you’re—you’re. . .”

“Franz,—come and help carry,” had broken in the Rector, seeing the look coming over the face, which he knew so well—the look of intent and painful searching back—that search that must not be made too intently,—“see,—here’s Miss Sinclair carrying things that you can help to . . .”

“Ah! yes,—I can carry all—everything;—give them to me,—they’re not heavy,”—rapidly spoken and articulated, and the voice no longer low and, muttering, but with something of the same old tenor ring and clearness about it.

The several small things that Claire was carrying were handed over to him, but they weren’t enough to satisfy; they were neither

large nor heavy,—he didn't feel the burden of them,—his fingers, his arms were ready to take more.

“More,—give me something more to carry,” he asked, standing in front of Claire, and there was the light of pleasure in his purple eyes as he looked at her. “I'll do anything for you,—I've seen you before,—you used to come to me when I was ill,—I know you did, Ambrose told me, and——and, I remember.”

Ah! that ‘remember—!’ The memory had come back, but how far? Only clearly, consecutively, to things *since*; nothing but stray, doubtful recollections just now and again to things *before*. Was this all he was ever to have? Was this to be his return of memory,—only this,—nothing more? Was the knowledge of his existence to date from three to four months ago! Was the man of thirty years to have no more life to look back upon, than what a very little child would have?

Wait;—if the memory of the *before* were to come, the shock of that fatal night would also come, and who could tell, what dire

effect the awakening to *that* memory would not even now have? The body, though strengthened and resuscitated; and the mind, though partially restored and lightened,—are not ready yet. There is more patience, more time, more careful, tender guardianship needed.

Ambrose Liddon's labour with this one, is not ended yet. He is offering,—yea, he has offered, everything—willingly, ungrudgingly; not for months or years only, but—if needs be—for time; time which can have no date affixed to it. Will it be the limited labour of his life—*this*?—the tending, guarding, waiting upon, and always living with—him, who though a man of thirty, has practically only the knowledge of a few months? Are the intellectual capabilities of a man like Ambrose Liddon to be circumscribed—thus?—for always? Is that fire and power, that grand humanitarian love, that rare attracting force—to be imprisoned, aye, almost entombed, thus? Is the man, who by his godly strength, his genius, his wide and all-encompassing sympathy, the man who could and would touch the hearts of thousands of

men and women,—is he to *die* to all this, for the sake of one man, for the sake of one act,—an act of thoughtlessness?

The thought came to Ambrose Liddon, though in a different form and with different logic, to this. The thought came to him as it would to a humble man. The powers, if power he had, were God's; the love, God's; the life, God's,—not his. Therefore, if God willed what now He was putting before him, for always,—God's Will should be his will, though everything that had made life to him should be withheld.

This is what Ambrose Liddon willed his will,—through the strength and grace God gave him,—to accept. This is what he could, even, let his mind dwell upon with calmness,—so entire was the submission. This is what made him, if possible, all the gentler; the more tender, the more devoted, to his charge. This is what made him love to feel, the clinging affection, that the violinist gave to him; made him like to hear him call him just 'Ambrose,' as though he were his real brother by kinship. For, if God meant him always to live with this fellow-man,—always

to live for him,—always to die to everything else because of him,—then, God was very good to be giving him this one man's full affection and confidence.

But,—this was all possible, all submitted to and mentally arranged, *if* it had to be,—up to the date when the Sinclairs came to pass their fortnight's holiday at Strathling. Then, as day by day went by of that all too short fortnight, Ambrose Liddon found himself *not* living in this atmosphere of entire submission,—of entire resignation.

“There is a sweetness in life, of which I have not tasted before,” he said to himself, “and now it is being put to my very lips: What—is this, too, to be thrust away?—is this, too, to be dead to me?—is this deepest feeling of the human heart to be buried? Is this—God,—this earthly blessing that Thou puttest before me,—even in my very path,—is this not to be accepted, *because* my life is ever to be cut apart,—ever to be separated, ever to be lived, as it were,—alone?”

Then came other thoughts. Was he not magnifying the part he had had, in marring the life of the violinist? Was he not

exaggerating the greatness of the sacrifice God might, from henceforth, require of him? Was he not perhaps taking the crooked and ill-regulated dictates of his own will, to be the mandates of God's Will? Was he not, in reference to himself, regarding God,—not in the light of a merciful Creator, loving to see the happiness of His creatures, as they joy in the mercies and blessings, that He showers upon them,—but, in the light of a strict, and exacting Master, crushing down His servants beneath the burden of their penalties? Yet——

“My son, do not strive, do not insist, do not harass yourself to *know*, before it is God's Will that you should know.”

How well he remembered now these words, that his mother had so often, when he was first entering upon his work, addressed to him! How gentle had been the hand that she had laid upon his throbbing brow, as—with too ardent a zeal and too feverish an eagerness,—he had striven to know, what was not yet ready for him, or what he was not yet ready to receive!

“Rest, rest, my son,—it is in peace and

quiet waiting that the Will of God is best learnt, not in struggling and striving;—you are marring the beauty of what He will in His Own Time, and in His Own Way, reveal.”

How true were her words! The priest of God had been learning to know and to bless them. All his work had been entered into, in a quieter, more dependent spirit, of late years. His fiery zeal, untempered, unrestricted, would have wrought havoc in the midst of his labour. His eager, striving insistence to do and to be and to act, would have led him into error, which again would have caused him intense bitterness of spirit, and continual remorse.

But now,—what was he doing now? Had the old spirit of impatience and unrest, returned to him? Had the old unrestrained—“show me at this very step, which way to go, which thing to do, I *must* know *now*,”—come again with all its old human arrogance? Was the spirit, which had so lately been clouded for lack of faith and dependence, to be darkened again for the same reason, for the same cause? Nay,—Ambrose Liddon, though

stirred by thoughts, which would not at once yield themselves to the promptings of his higher, more divinely-regulated nature,—still was, in a way, in submission to it.

—Those last days of June, when the breath of summer is very sweet, and when the whisper of music seems to tread upon every whiff of air,—passed away all too quickly for those four, who were spending their time together, in the wooded uplands of Strathling. They would fain have trebled the length of every day; if only to have put off the coming of that to-morrow, which always brought them closer to the time, when Ambrose Liddon and Franz Humbert would be left alone again, and Dr. Sinclair and his sister would have to make their way back to Abbeyslea.

“O, Marc,—why *does* the time go?” Claire would say, with a sigh as deep as it was long.

“Well,—because nothing ever stops it,” her brother would answer prosaically, “not all the wishing, all the insisting in the world, ever makes the slightest difference. So, you

might just as well not have sighed that great sigh."

"I can't help it, I *am* so sorry,—we've only three,—four more days,—four more days and a bit, and I know these will go even faster than the others have. Marc,—*can't* you stay any longer?"

"Claire,—how many times haven't I had that question before? Do you think, I want to leave any more than you . . ."

"You *can't* wish as much as I can, Marc," she interrupted, with emphatic gravity.—
"Women always have ten times as strong wishes as men have, so—you *can't* wish to stay as much as I do."

"Why can't I?"

"Oh!—because you can't."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Your same old 'woman's reason,'" he said, laughing,—
"I shan't argue with you, if you bring that up. But, all the same, I think it's for me to mind going back, far more than you, because . . ."

"Marc,—you don't *love* the hills, and the woods, and the wild, free life, and the do-

nothing, and the dreaming-idling about, as I do. And you don't *love* wandering about with Franz, and talking to him, and seeing what a lot he remembers, and how much he can do now, and how much stronger he is. And—and—and—you don't *love* watching Mr. Liddon, and seeing how gentle and thoughtful he is, and how . . . how . . .”

“Anything else, Claire?”

“Yes,—how different he is to everyone else you have ever seen,—or ever heard speak—or ever . . .”

“And yet, you scarcely ever speak to him, or go near him, if you can possibly help it,” he broke in again. “You’re a humbug, Claire,—quite a humbug! Sometimes, I believe he must think what a shy, stupid little sister, I’ve got,—who won’t say anything more than ‘yes’ or ‘no,’ when she’s spoken to,—at least, when he speaks to her,—she can talk fast enough to me, or old Franz.”

“O, Marc,—am I as stupid as all that?” she asked, quite concerned.

“Yes,—stupider,” said he, relentlessly,—

“What are you doing now, talking over here with me, when I want to be quiet and think,—and when they’d much rather have you over there with them? See,”—pointing to a turn, a little further on, where the Rector and the violinist were standing, and looking back after them,—“they are wondering when we are coming. You go and join them, Claire,—I really must be alone to . . .”

“That horrid letter, you had this morning,”—she interrupted,—“why don’t you tell me what’s in it? I know it isn’t exactly a business one, and you won’t show it me, and yet—now you want me to leave you, because you have to think over . . .”

“Claire,—you’re only making up, and guessing,”—he said,—“you’re too curious and . . .”

“I know it’s fretting you, Marc,”—she said vehemently,—“and I can’t help trying to guess, if you won’t tell me.”

“Not now, little sister, not now,”—he said,—“perhaps, a little later,—I must

think alone. Quick,—hasten on,—for I see they are coming back towards us. Say—‘I’m lazy and morose, and like my own society best, but—that the sunshine of your presence, will fully make up for my absence!’ ”

“Likely I shall say *that!*”—she called back severely.

“Well, I’m only telling you what Liddon said about you, the other day,”—he retorted,—“and *he* can’t make a mistake, or say anything that’s untrue, can he?”

She didn’t answer, but turned her back well upon him ; rather afraid, though, notwithstanding, that he would be able to see the deep flush of colour that his last words had brought to her face.

“I wonder whether he *did* say that,”—thought she to herself, her brown eyes shining at the mere possibility of such a thing,”—I wonder whether he just—even, *likes* me. I think if only I could know that he really and truly *likes* me, and that I might see him sometimes,—no, often,—and hear him speak, and look at him, and know that

he likes me,—I could be quite,—no, nearly —content. Because, of course,—of course, he's too good to *love*,—I mean,—to love back. I can,—I can't help loving him with all my whole heart, and I always shall, but—I'm sure,—yes, I'm sure,——*he's* too good—to love —"

What a paradoxical statement,—too good to love!

CHAPTER XLVII.

I CAN'T FORGIVE.

THE night before Dr. Sinclair left Strathling, he sought a private interview with Ambrose Liddon.

"I want to see you, particularly, by yourself,—before I go,"—he said to the Rector,—"I have something I wish to talk over with you. Can you spare an hour, or so?"

It was easily arranged. Now that the violinist knew, that Claire was really leaving on the very to-morrow, he was most eager, most insistent, to have her by him constantly. As a rule, and up to now, he had always shown the feeling, that he liked having her with him, and talking to her, but,—always, 'Ambrose' must be there too. He couldn't live without him, he couldn't rest, he couldn't be content or happy, unless he were somewhere close at hand. He would grow

restless, fretful, uneasy, even moody and silent, unless he had the familiar face near him, the familiar voice speaking and joining in the conversation, the familiar hand and step ever handy to be by, and helping him.

"Where's Ambrose?"—he would say, if, for a short while even, he were away from him,—“I'd rather he came with us,—I'm not happy without Ambrose.”

But,—at last, he seemed to have quite taken in, that his friends,—his dear friends, the Sinclairs—were really leaving, and that he should not see them again for, perhaps, a very long time. And so, with quite his old, own, characteristic impetuosity, he bade Claire come with him on her last evening, for a long walk. He demurred slightly at first, because ‘Ambrose’ could not come too; but, at the same time, took quite a pleasure in the new thought and new responsibility, which seemed to dawn upon him, of being a sole escort.

“Come,—we will have no one with us, this evening,—not even Ambrose,”—he said,—“we will go by ourselves,—a long

way, somewhere where we've not been before, and then—when you've gone, I'll show him the same way, and tell him what we have talked about. He'll like to know,—he must know,—but now, we won't let him come with us,—will we?"

And so, Claire and he had started off; he, with something of the light, springing step, that was so peculiarly his in the old days, and with now and again, the ringing laugh coming back to the two men, as they watched them disappear out of sight.

"Liddon,—it's wonderful!"—exclaimed Dr. Sinclair involuntarily, forgetful for the moment of everything else, except the greatness of the change in the violinist that was being wrought,—“you and I alone know how wonderful;—for, only we two saw the absolute and awful wreck that was. I feel convinced,—entirely convinced now, that there is every hope of his whole life returning to him, not long hence. The most strange, the most—as it were—impossible, change, has already come about,—what comes after this, will be slight compared to

what is now. Don't you think so, yourself?"

"I think that anyone who doubts God's Mercy and Power, after witnessing this, must indeed have his eyes fast-blinded," said the Rector gravely,—“Yet—I was the one, whose faith failed at the onset,—I was the one who declared it to be impossible, and stumbled in the darkness, because I couldn't believe, and couldn't, even, wait to see what God's Mercy and Goodness, would be.”

“Will you never forget that?—always blame yourself for that great—what you call—sin?” asked the doctor slowly, looking at the marked features of the priest as he spoke, and noting the, even, additional power and calmness that had come to his face, since ‘the strength had been perfected through weakness.’

“*Can* I ever forget? *Can* I ever hold the doubt and mistrust, the rebellion and the base denial,—anything else, than a great sin?”—asked the priest sadly.

“No,”—said the doctor, in low tones,—“Having repented of the sin, I suppose, does

not actually and tangibly undo the sin, though a merciful God forgives and blots out the stain of it."

He paused. The thought crossed him, how strange it was, to be hearing himself speaking in this strain. The words scarcely sounded his own, and yet—he was truly feeling and believing them, as he spoke.

But,—immediately, another thought came, and with it, his face darkened and his jaw lowered.

"Liddon,"—he said, and his voice sounded harsh and grating on his own ear,—“may a man never keep a grudge,—never bear a hatred if,—”

“If he means to serve God?” finished the other quickly.

“Yes,—must he, because one thing is impossible to him to give up, therefore hold himself a rebel to God,—a rebel to all his other instincts,—a rebel to what he intends his life to be, henceforward?”

“You speak strongly,”—said Ambrose Liddon, his voice deepening,—“and—you are referring, not to any man, but to—yourself?”

“To myself,—aye, to myself,”—replied his companion, pausing on the words and emphasizing them bitterly, as he did so,—“Liddon,—you know something of me, something of the gloom and darkness that have been over my life. You do not know all, because I have been too proud, too reserved to tell you, but you know some of what helped to make me, the discontented cynic, you first knew me as. But . . . ”

“The life that has at one time the greatest darkness over it, shines out with so much the greater light later on,”—broke in the Rector gently.

“But not for me,—not for me, entirely,” answered Sinclair, with some ambiguity,—“If the one thing is impossible, that one thing will always have to remain.”

“Tell me more,”—said the other,—“tell me as man to man,—what you give into my keeping, will never be betrayed. And,—the bond of fellowship, of—shall I say it,—brotherhood, between us now, is very strong, is it not, Sinclair?”

No need to ask,—yet, the question was put, to strengthen the confidence.

Ambrose Liddon did know something,—aye, more than any other man, of what Dr. Sinclair's life had been, before he had met him. But, he knew nothing consecutive, nothing definite. This night, however, Marcus Sinclair meant to tell him more. He was labouring under a fresh difficulty; uncertain what way to take, which way to turn. It was not that he wanted—he argued to himself—sympathy, in connection with his past life,—but, at this point, he did want, he must have, another man's advice. No man better fitted to give this advice than his friend, Ambrose Liddon. Yet, fairly to receive this advice, it became a necessity for him fairly to state the grounds, upon which he required it. And, to do this, he must unfold much that he had never unfolded before.

“The bond of brotherhood between us now, is very strong,—is it not, Sinclair?”—the priest had said; and those words were sufficient to unlock the door from which already much rust and covering had been

cleared away—of what had for years been fast closed.

“It has been a life with very little light in it,” said Ambrose Liddon, when the deep and full voice of Dr. Sinclair had ceased speaking,—“yet . . . ”

“One spot of brightness all the way through, I will not,—I cannot, even if I would, deny that,” said Marcus Sinclair,—“my sister’s love has been, humanly speaking, my salvation,—I mean, it has prevented my going to the dogs.”

“And, again, it was through her, you came to visit your father’s home,”—said the other musingly,—“and, by this, you were able to use your powers and skill, to prolong your father’s life, in which . . . ”

“But, you clearly understand, I did not do this because I wished to,—because I had any feeling of forgiveness towards him, or because I—in any way—wished to confer a benefit upon him. I did it in the heat and

impulse of the moment, because I thought I should, thus, spare myself feelings of remorse, afterwards."

"Yes,—I understand how it all came forward then, but—what about now? You have different views, different opinions, different ways of looking at things, and—above all, a different knowledge. Supposing your father to be lying in the same state now, as he was then,—with what feelings would you look upon him? With the feelings of a son,—bound by God's Law to love and—if possible, obey that father,—or, with the feelings simply of a physician?"

Dr. Sinclair was silent. Twice he seemed on the point of speaking, twice he refrained.

He was holding in his hand an open letter,—if letter it could be called; it was the sheet of paper on which Beatrice, at the dictation of her father, had written the three short lines, requesting the presence of Dr. Sinclair at Islay Court.

Ambrose Liddon glanced at the sheet, and then slowly took it from between the other's fingers, folded it, and put it in its envelope.

“What do you *wish* to do, in answer to *that*?”—he said quietly, holding it out again to him.

“Wish—?”—exclaimed Dr. Sinclair vehemently, seizing the letter and, with sudden fury, tearing it up into bits,—“wish?—I can have only one wish,—only one thought concerning it. Do you know *why* it has been sent to me,—written like that,—in those few words,—in that cut-and-dried phraseology?—It is to insult me, to . . .”

“How do you know?”—interrupted the other gravely, “how is it possible for you to put this exact rendering upon it?”

Again, Dr. Sinclair paused before he answered. The angry flush that had mounted to his brow, died away; the flash of pride and passion that had gleamed from his dark eyes, gave place to a sombre melancholy.

“Liddon,”—he said, his voice trembling with the restraint, he was putting upon it—“*I know*. My father is a man who never would, and never will forg . . .”

“Stay,” broke in the priest, “Upon

what authority, can you use that word 'never?' "

"Is not a life's experience, sufficient?"—asked the other bitterly,—“do you ask for more grounds for saying it on, than that?—Liddon, if you had felt the narrow, relentless, malevolent nature of the man who is by natural ties, my father, you would not ask me, upon what authority, I use that word,—‘never’”

He hesitated a moment; but, it was for no answer that he was waiting. He was but bringing before his mind, in summary form, what all too clearly showed, the truth of his statement.

“Give a glance over what has been passing even just of late,—*since* his illness,” he continued, his heavy brows contracting, and his voice hardening,—“No line, no word have I received from either Beatrice or him. Beatrice knew that—practically speaking,—his life was saved, when I left the house, that . . . that, so far as she could see, I had voluntarily and freely used my skill for this end. Yet,—though she was aware of where

we lived, though she was aware that Claire and, perhaps, I, myself, would be desiring to know how he was getting on,—she set her face as inexorably against us, as she had before. It is now full eight months, since Claire and I were, by Lambert's strategy, both of us at Islay Court,—and there has no communication been made with us,—nothing,—absolute silence. If I had not, myself, unbeknown to them, made inquiries into what I wished to know, neither Claire nor I, would have been enlightened until four days ago, as to whether our father were still living.—What does all this point to, Liddon? Any relenting,—any signs of a reconciliation being desired,—any possible favourable rendering, of these lines that I have now received?"

He put the questions sharply, almost peremptorily.

The curves in the priest's mouth straightened; his eyes—steady, quiet, kind eyes, often—flashed.

"You speak as a man with a man's authority, and with a man's knowledge,"—

he said, with some sternness, "and from that ground—if you argue from that ground alone—I can give you no answer, except that what you have told me *does* point to the conclusion, you, yourself, arrive at. . . ."

"Well—," put in Dr. Sinclair quickly,—
"What else is there to consider,—what else is there to *prevent* my drawing and your agreeing to, this conclusion? And what else is there to *prevent* my acting according to this conclusion?"

"There is only one thing that can alter it," said the other, looking steadily into the doctor's face, as he spoke,—"*and that is the knowledge that—'the things that are impossible to man, are possible to God.'*" From your human point of argument, you are, probably, perfectly correct, in drawing the conclusion you have; but, once draw your argument from a higher basis, and what seems to you as an absolute impossibility, becomes and *is* possible. Thus, I say again, you spoke only upon a limited authority, when you stated as an absolute fact, that your father never would and never

will forgive. You must not, you cannot bind the power of God, within the limits of man's reasoning. Instead, it . . . ”

“What you have known, what you have acted upon, all your life, Liddon,”—broke in Sinclair hoarsely,—“comes natural to you. But, with me,—I have yet to learn these things.”

It was a humble confession, and as the proud man made it, he lowered his eyes beneath the steady penetrating gaze of the other's.

“My brother,”—said the man of God, with that peculiar blending of power and sweetness, which acted as a kind of charm upon all those, to whom it was directed,—“life, and the capabilities of life become so much grander and diviner, when viewed from this higher standpoint. Do not fear to learn, what will day by day and year by year, open out—*God* to you.”

There was silence between the two men, for a short while. Then, Ambrose Liddon spoke again.

“Sinclair,”—he said, rather abruptly,—

"what do you mean to do, in reference to that letter?"

"That's exactly what I want your opinion upon,"—said the doctor, rather abstractedly.

He was still thinking, and the letter just at that moment, seemed of less importance than it had before.

"In other words,—what should I do, if I were in your place?"—rejoined the other.

"Yes."

He was roused now. The Rector had plainly put the question that he, himself, was desirous of asking.

But, Ambrose Liddon did not answer directly. He gazed out upon the sloping hills, and then—from them, into the shadowed valleys.

"Sinclair,"—he said, still looking away, but upon his face a light was dawning,—
"the opinion of men is, after all, not of much account,—it is possible to do what appears foolish in their eyes, without it *materially* affecting us?"

"Yes—?"—said his companion inquiringly, for the words coming just then, seemed rather ambiguous.

“If I were you,”—Ambrose Liddon went on, still averting his eyes, still speaking as though he were only half aware that he was addressing anyone but himself,—“I should obey the summons of that letter,—I should go to Islay Court,—should see again my father, and . . .”

“But—Liddon,—I *can't* forgive. If that man insults me,—if he has sent for me,—not from natural feeling, but from the wish to further insult and curse me,—I cannot,—I tell you, I cannot look upon him, and—not *hate him*.”

The doctor's face was white, and his teeth clenched. Fierce and strong were the feelings that were surging within.

Suddenly, the priest turned and faced him.

“If you cannot forgive,—if you cannot pass over,”—he said, his voice trembling with intense emotion,—“then,—what hope have you hereafter, that God will forgive you? For, I say unto you that—‘If ye forgive *not* men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.’ Can you alter, or make null, those Words, that God made Man has spoken?”

There was no reply.

The doctor's face was buried in his hands.

"Sinclair."

Softly, now, the priest spoke;—the fierce zeal and passion had passed.

The doctor raised his head.

"Sinclair,"—said the priest again, laying his hand upon the other's arm,—“the Love of God passeth knowledge, and—the Power of God passeth knowledge,—I tell you it is possible by that Power and by that Love,—that, ere many weeks or months pass, that Hate you bear in your heart, be turned into —*Love*.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE CHILD AND THE VIOLINIST.

NEARLY four months had passed away, since Dr. Sinclair and his sister, spent their fortnight's holiday with Ambrose Liddon and his charge, at Strathling.

The people of Abbeyslea were getting weary of waiting, for the return of their rightful Rector. The clergyman who had taken up his abode in Abbeyslea Rectory, was all very well in his way ; but, he had neither the influence, the power, nor the zeal of him, whom they had begun, notwithstanding the shortness of his ministry among them, to look upon as their lawful possession. The reports that were always getting about, relative to his speedy return, were now regarded in the light, only, of reports. People would shake their heads as they heard them, and inquire carefully and un-

believingly into the source, from whence they had sprung; and, even when that seemed fairly reliable, they still declared that what they had heard with their ears, was of little moment, until they could prove it by the sight of their eyes.

Thus it was, that when the Reverend Liddon, together with the violinist, were actually on their return journey to Abbeyslea, the people of Abbeyslea were still under the idea, that what they had heard, was only one of the many, never true or substantiated, reports. It was as well, perhaps, that this was so; for, by this means the return of the Rector, and the settling in again into the Rectory, was accomplished far more quietly, and with far more ease, than it would otherwise have been.

Ambrose Liddon had not remained at Strathling, all through the summer months. Shortly after the departure of the Sinclairs, he thought it advisable,—owing partly to the increasing strength and energy of his charge, and partly because of the feeling of dulness, that fell upon them after their

friends had left,—to change the scenes, lives and occupations, to which they had become so accustomed.

“Go on with him, as you have been doing, in a way,”—Dr. Sinclair had said when the Rector had, before he left, been discussing their probable movements,—“but, remember that now, the steps that may be taken, can—through his stronger health and more awakened powers,—be more decided than they have been. Feel your way carefully, but venture more,—he is able to bear it.—Your greatest difficulty now, will be in connection with sounds,—but, even in this, I think, with watchful care,—you may make some great steps forward.”

Accordingly, Ambrose Liddon had, both following out his own judgment and Dr. Sinclair’s, moved from Strathling; and spent sometimes weeks, sometimes days, at the different small towns or villages, through which he arranged that they should pass.

—It happened one evening, about ten days after their return to Abbeyslea, that Mrs. Trevor was standing outside the side-garden-

gate, looking up the sloping field, to see if she could catch the first glimpse of her husband, returning from his work.

The evening was warm, but already there was that feeling of rising moisture all round, which comes with advancing Autumn.

Mrs. Trevor had only a shawl thrown lightly over her shoulders; her head was bare, her feet lightly shod.

"He will not be long," she said half aloud, feeling the dampness, but anxious to wait just the few more minutes, to see if he would not come.

She was right,—he was not long; even as she spoke the words, she saw his figure appearing on the brow of the hill.

"Arthur,"—she said, when he, with quickened steps, had reached her side, and as she spoke, she raised her face to his, for the kiss he always gave her,—“Arthur,—I am so glad you were able to get away a little earlier to-night. We have visitors coming this evening, you know, and—I do not like entertaining by myself;—besides . . . ”

A delicate colour crept over brow and cheek as she paused, not even intending to go on, but wishing him to know what she was feeling, and knowing that he would know, without further words.

“Marion,”—he said, with that gentle banter with which he loved to tease his wife,—“how you like to pretend you can’t get on without me! After all these years of experience, and when you know I’m not half so clever in these kind of things as you are, it . . .”

“Hush, Arthur,—you know you’re only talking of what isn’t true,”—she interrupted, laying her arm in his, and with almost imperceptible guidance, turning his footsteps down the garden path, “and we have only just a few minutes alone, before they come. Arthur,—it’s all right,—it will be all right, won’t it?”

“Yes, dear, quite,” he said decidedly, looking down into the quiet face that, just at that moment, was raised rather anxiously to his. “Enid is so much stronger, and—you know, it is not as if she had not seen him before. Wasn’t it only two mornings

ago when she was with you, that you saw him—though he didn't see you?"

"Yes Arthur, and really on the whole, he is not so terribly changed as I expected. He walks just in the same way, and laughs too,—that high, peculiar laugh of his. I think, perhaps, if it were not for that snow-white hair, and the rather painful look about his forehead, that he would not appear so very different, only,"—shivering slightly — "we know, — we heard how dreadful it was, at one time."

"True,—but, Marion,—Enid doesn't know, —she only thinks that he has had a long illness, and that that has made this change in him,"—answered he, telling her what she already knew, but knowing that the repetition of it would give assurance.—"And, you see, Sinclair,—though I know he did not wish to press it, if it would be against our wishes, yet . . . "

"I know, Arthur," she broke in smiling, — "he said that Mr. Humbert was always referring now, to some little girl whom he used to know, and yet couldn't remember, or

find again. It must be our Enid that he meant, and when he sees her, just as he used to see her, he'll sure to know her."

"Yes, he'll know her,—there's no other little girl anywhere, like Enid," said the father proudly.

And then, husband and wife went in.

"Will he be able to teach me, again?" asked Enid, her thoughts full of the coming visitor, as she ran to meet them at the door. "He'll say I don't play nearly so well as I used to, and . . ."

"What, Enid?—not so well,—when you can play that curious air he used to like so much?" said her father.

"Oh! but Father, that's only one thing," she answered deprecatingly, "and I've only picked that up by myself, just from having heard him play it,—and I may have made lots of mistakes about it. D'you know, Father, I—"

"Well, little girlie, what is it? What a tell-tale face you've got,—I can see you're going to say something, you don't quite like to say."

“But I don’t mind just telling *you*, Father,” she said, flushing all over though, as she spoke, “it’s only that I think,—I *do* think that Mr. Humbert’s white hair is *so* beautiful,—much more beautiful than when it was yellow, I should so like just—just to touch it,—d’you think I may, if—if he hasn’t forgotten all about me?”

Ah!—this was the thought that troubled the little maid, more than anything else. Supposing her master had forgotten mostly everything about her. He might,—Mother had said that perhaps he might, because he had had such a long illness, and had been away so much, and had seen such a great deal while he had been away. So, then, he *might*, perhaps, even have forgotten that he used to teach her, and used to tell her that one day she would play beautifully,—if she learnt to love her violin as much as he did, his. Yet——

“Mother, I won’t mind much,—indeed, I won’t,” she would say, when talking about it,—bravely keeping the ready tears back from her great dark eyes, “only,—*I* remem-

ber every,—everything,—and *why* won't he?"

"Well, dear,—perhaps he will," the mother would answer, "only when people have very long illnesses like he has had, they sometimes don't remember so well as they did before."

Then, Enid would try to be quite content with this. If her dear master had forgotten all about her,—it wouldn't be his fault, or because he had wished to forget her,—but only because he had been so ill.

It was getting on for half-past seven, before the expected ring at the front door bell was heard.

"Go and meet them, Arthur,—do," said Mrs. Trevor, still a little anxious, "you've spoken to him several times, since he has been back,—he'll like to see your face before he comes in here again,—after so many months."

"Shall I come with you, Father?" asked Enid, jumping up from the great chair, in which she had ensconced herself.

He looked across at his wife.

“Just as she likes,” she said, all her own anxiety flying with the naturalness of the child,—“only don’t talk about your music all at once, Enid,”—she added, smiling at her, as with her hand held tight in her father’s, and her fair head leaning rather shyly against his sleeve, they made their way out of the door together.

“Do I know Mrs. Trevor,—have I met her before?”—the violinist was saying rather querulously, as he stood outside with Dr. Sinclair;—“I wish Ambrose had come,—he would know better than you,—why didn’t he come? I don’t think I know . . .”

“Come in Sinclair,—come in Humbert,”—said the voice of Mr. Trevor, as at this moment he opened the door,—“we’re waiting for you,—want to have a nice evening together. Come,—it’s damp and cold outside,—but warm, and light and comfortable in here.”

The light from the hall lamp shone down upon Enid’s flaxen hair and shining eyes, as—loosening her father’s hand,—she made a step towards her master.

"How do you do, Mr. Humbert?" she said with that demure quaintness, with which she always hid her feelings when excited, "Mother's in the drawing-room, and is waiting to see you.—May I take your hand?"

Quite passively, Franz Humbert took the little hand outheld to him.

"Flaxen,—flaxen, I *knew* it was," he murmured, touching—as in a dream—the child's soft-falling hair.

But that was all he said, as his eyes wandered from the hair to the little girl's delicate face, with its flush of colour upon it. And, while he was looking at her, Enid led him in to "Mother."

The room was lit up, the curtains drawn, and a small fire was burning in the hearth. It was early days for fires; but just in the evenings when it grew chilly, they liked to feel its warmth, and see its brightness.

"Sinclair,—Sinclair," said the violinist, turning to him just as he was entering the room, "where am I,—I've been here before. Oh! where is Ambrose,—he would tell me,—he knows,—he told me to come.

—I know,—I know I've been here before, and . . . ”

He stopped short, and looked again at Enid. As he did so, the troubled searching in his eyes, vanished.

“ You're my little Fairy,” — he said smiling,—“ I've seen you before, haven't I ? ”

The child's lip trembled. Did he only *just* remember her, then ?

“ Oh ! Mr. Humbert,—of course you've seen me before,” —she said emphatically. “ Don't you remember you . . . ”

But,—Mother had said she was not to say anything about music yet.

The key, however, was already given.

“ I remember, I remember,” —cried he quickly,—“ you used to—to—what did you do, Fairy ? I used to—to love to come, but what,—what was it for ? ”

Enid glanced over to her mother, who was talking to Dr. Sinclair; they were both watching her, and both—smiling. Then, they couldn't mind her speaking about her music now. Besides, her master was asking her about it.

"You used to teach me to play,—to play on the violin," she said, taking his hand again, and looking up into his face.

"Play to me,—play to me," he said dreamily, still with a half-troubled look in his eyes.

"Shall I,—may I, Mr. Humbert?" cried she, dancing round him, while still she held his hand. "D'you know, I can play a tune *you* used to play on your violin, and . . ."

"I never played,—I don't know what you are talking about,"—he broke in peevishly, turning away his head as he spoke,—then, suddenly looking at her again,—“But, play to me,—play to me, Fairy,” he said passionately. “I must hear, I *must*—I *will*.”

The child was too wrapped up in the thought of playing again before him, to heed the strangeness of his words, or the strongness of the emotion that was passing over him. He was always,—always had been, unlike anyone else;—but, she loved his odd ways.

"Franz," said Dr. Sinclair, drawing near to him, while the child ran to get her instru-

ment, "would you like to have some music to-night?—it won't be on the piano, you know."

"She's going to play,—my little Fairy," said the violinist softly. "I know she plays sweetly,—tenderly,—what a pity Ambrose isn't here! Can't you go and fetch him, or,—or, shall I?"

He made half a step towards the door.

"I'm ready,—I'm ready, Mr. Humbert," cried Enid, coming forward with her instrument in her hand. "Don't go away. See,—see, is it tuned right?"

"I don't know," he said feebly, looking at the instrument and touching it, but his eyes clouding as he did so.

"Listen, Mr. Humbert,—listen," said the little girl, throwing back her head, and raising the violin, as she spoke.—"This is what you used to play."

Softly the refrain began. It was one that the violinist had once loved to dwell upon time after time, when he was in a happy mood. The child had often heard him play it, and with her quick ear and strong imitative

powers, she had learnt to express it, almost as he used to.

At first the violinist's face seemed to darken, as he let his heavy lids drop over his eyes. Then, by degrees, and slowly he raised them again and drew nearer,—nearer to the child.

“Let me have it,—let me have it, Fairy,” he cried.—“This is mine,—*mine*.”

“He knows it's his own tune,”—thought she, and, without a murmur, she put the violin in his hands.—“Oh! how I shall *love* to hear him play again.”

“Mine,—mine,”—he cried again.—“O Fairy,—how happy we shall be.”

Then,——with a sudden gesture, with a flash of the eye, with a shake back of the white locks, from off the forehead,—Franz Humbert *touched,—felt,—and loved—again*.

That night, all the past was restored to him.

CHAPTER XLIX.

FREE.

AMBROSE LIDDON's guardianship of the man, whose life he, at one time, thought he had marred and stricken for always, — was ended.

The full, comprehensive, much-loved life of a 'priest of God,' might be resumed again. The officiating in the House of God, the work amongst his parishioners of Abbeyslea, and the strenuous efforts amongst his poor brethren in Rich Lane, might become again his.

"O God, Thou hast given back '*life*' to me," — was the outburst of his full heart, as he took to him again what had been so long withheld.

But, this was not all. The new happiness which had been, as he had called it, "laid in his very path," and which, with that too

hasty judgment, he had thought, was not and could not, from the now circumscribed circumstances of his life, be his,—lay still open before him, ready for him to stretch forth his hand and take.

Had Marcus Sinclair had any underlying motive when, that first evening upon the Rector's and the violinist's return to the Rectory, he had said,—“Come round to us in the morning, Liddon,—you and Franz,—I shall be out; but Claire will be in,—she will be pleased to see you. You'll find her looking rather pale and thin again, I'm afraid,—hankering after those old days at Strathling, I tell her,—but, she'll get all right now that the two friends from Strathling have come to Abbeyslea. I believe she was beginning to get hopeless about your—and Franz's return.”

Probably Claire's brother had had no double motive in speaking these words. His and Claire's lives were peculiarly now wrapped up in the lives of the Rector and the violinist. They couldn't be undivided. The seeds of friendship and co-feeling that

had been sown, were fast rooted. What had been,—they didn't wish, they didn't even think of, ever undoing. It was a pleasure and a light in all their lives; it was to grow and mature; it was to strengthen and expand. It was one of those mutual friendships made, not for Time, but for—Eternity.

But, Ambrose Liddon thought of those words of Dr. Sinclair's later on, when he was gathering up in his heart, fragments of what had been. They assured him to a certain degree of what—because he was a very humble and self-deprecating man in reference to himself and his own attractions—he wished to feel a confidence in, and yet hardly dared to.

But, it was not these words, nor any that Marcus Sinclair, before or after, inadvertently let drop, that made him return in the evenings to his now lonely library, with the picture before his eyes, of once again having around him those graces and softenings of life, that had encircled him when his mother was alive. It was not the thought of what

the brother had said, that made him feel his pulses quickening and his heart burning when, at times, he would let his thoughts wander from their usual train; or, in the midst of some hard problems or difficult arrangements,—find, underlying all these, something closer, sweetening everything that lay outside. It was not the shyness, or the timid diffidence, that Claire had shown towards him, while she had been staying at Strathling. Neither was it the shadow that would show itself in her eyes, during those last days spent there, notwithstanding all the efforts she made to hide her feelings. But,—it was that sudden flash of light, that quick, sunny smile that had come to her face when she had first seen him again.

“She is glad to see me,—very glad,” he thought to himself, averting his eyes though from the flood of light.

Yet, even though he averted his eyes at that moment, he partially unveiled, what he had tried to keep so completely veiled before. For, with strictest honour he had guarded

his every word and deed, in reference to her. She must not know he loved her, when over his head was hanging, that which would for ever prevent there being happiness, either for him or for her, in the love. He must not stir within her heart feelings which would and must, for ever remain unsatisfied. Thus, neither by look, word, or action, had Ambrose Liddon shown the first woman he had ever loved, with the close, personal adoring love,—which was entirely separate from the comprehensive love that he gave to all around him,—that she was most precious to him, and that in her life would lie the greatest earthly happiness of his life.

But, when that night came, when he knew that Franz Humbert would no longer need his constant guardianship; when he saw plainly that the life, he had willingly offered for the sake of that life, that he thought he had for ever spoiled,—was not needed; when he recognised that the sacrifice he had offered to God, was not accepted by that God, because in His God's Mercy and Power, He had stretched forth His Hand to

defeat the necessity for it,—then the priest of God knew that he might take what was offered, and what he had once thought would, for ever, be withheld from him.

“Far different is this to a mother’s love,” he had said to himself, when once the strong restraint in which he had held even all his thoughts was broken through,—“she, my mother, possessed me and my love,—I, her son, was her possession. But now, *I* may possess;—the life, I take to join one with my life, *is* my possession. Mine to guard and care for,—mine to help and watch over,—mine to honour and to love,—aye, to love. And she—so beautiful, so true, so full of trust and purity,—what will be the love she will give to me if . . .”

—How could he know?—he hadn’t asked her yet!

CHAPTER L.

‘CLAIRE.’

‘WAS it true?’

‘Had he—the man who was “too good to love,”—really,—not in a dream only, but *really* told her, that he loved and honoured her? She, who had never dared even to hope that he would love her, because he was so far beyond her, so “wonderful” in every way, so “different” to anyone else,—was it possible that he—loved—her?’

‘Loved? How could he love her? How could he, who was so clever, so great, so good,—so *very* good,—how could he love her? What was there in her, that he could love?’

‘Was it—was it that he *felt* somehow, that she could,—that she would,—nay, that she *did*, love him with all her heart and soul; that nothing could ever lessen this love;

that, even, if he had never told her about his love,—she would still, all her life through, have gone on loving him, and admiring him and everything he did,—always?—She could never have loved anyone else;—nothing could ever have made any difference. How could it? How could she have said—"I won't love, because it's no good to love,"—when she already loved, and could not help herself loving?—What would have been the good of her making up her mind to try and love someone else instead, when she knew that no one else could ever be loved or looked up to by her, in the same way as he was?'

'But,—*why* did he love her? She wasn't good like he was. She had tried to be, ever since she first began to know him; ever since that day when he had said that—'Everyone should live for the Honour and Glory of God;—but, she was only still *trying* to be good,—she wasn't good yet. She didn't look at life in the same way as she used to, but that was all through him, nothing to do with herself;—she wouldn't

have known any better, or cared to be any better, if it hadn't been for what his life and his words had shown her.'

'And she was so ignorant;—she didn't know half what other women did. There were other women in the world, she knew, who gave up their lives to doing good, and working amongst the poor, and being kind of saints in the world. How was it,—how could it be, that he—he, who was so good,—how was it that he didn't want one of these good women to be his wife? Wouldn't they have been much more help to him, much more— . . . And yet,—he himself, had said to her, that it was her,—not any more clever, or good, or experienced woman,—but *her*, whom he wanted to be his help in life, to be at his right hand, to join with him in his work.—Could he mean it?—Did he know how *unable* she was? Did he know what a child she was in many things?—Yes, he must know,—of course he must know;—*he* knows everything,—he doesn't make mistakes!'

'Perhaps then,—she wondered whether he

could know this, though she hadn't told him, for she had been able to say only such a very few words, because her heart had been so burning and overflowing with love,—but she did wonder, notwithstanding, whether he couldn't guess that though she were so ignorant and so unknowing about things,—that still, from the very greatness of her love, she would be able to do, what she had never done before. She *would* be able to help him, she *would* be able to go with him and to say the things he would like her to say, she would,—yes, she *would* be able to be like those good women, *because*,—anything, everything he wished her to do, she would do,—she would *love* to do. She wouldn't live any kind of life of her own now,—separated, or individual,—because, now, all her life would be lived in his life; therefore, the more and the longer her life was lived in his life, the more a part of his life it would become,—the more it would mould itself, into exactly what would be most pleasing, most beautiful, and most satisfying to him. Ah!—he must have guessed this;—he must

have felt, before he came and asked her to be his wife, that her love for him and his love for her, would be all that each could want.'

'But,—what would Marc say, when he heard? Would she have to tell him, or would he know in a moment, without her saying anything? Her cheeks were so hot, and her eyes,—she must just look at her eyes and see if he could not tell straight from them, what had happened,—without speaking. Ah! yes, he'd know,—he had never seen them looking like this before,—they were shining so, he must guess. Nothing else—but intensest happiness of love,—*could* make them look like this.'

'What would he say, though—? Hadn't she always told him that she would never marry? Hadn't she even said this a few weeks ago, when she had begun to think that Mr. Liddon,—Ambrose,—she meant,—that Ambrose was never going to return to Abbëyslea; or, that even if he did, he could never love her, or even think about her, because—he was so good? And Marc had

laughed,—laughed at her more than usual, when she had said it,—laughed, as if he meant to say, that he didn't believe her. Oh well,—if he didn't believe her then, that would make it all the better now,—he wouldn't mind so much, he'd—but, what would he do without her? Have to live by himself again, and perhaps —'

'Ah!—but there was his step in the hall,—she must go to him, and tell him. How strange she felt, though! She could hardly walk,—the shining in her eyes, was so great, that she could scarcely see a step before her! And speak—? she would never be able to speak. He *must* guess.

Guess!—but he'd never, *never* be able to guess how dreadfully,—terribly, happy, she felt!'

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Marc—!

He knew the sunshine was going to be taken out of his home, to be the sunshine in another's home. He had guessed it was

coming. But,—it was his greatest friend, who was taking it from him,—the noblest man he had ever met;—so, he could bear it better, than if it had been any other man.

““The noblest man,”—did he say?—Nay,—he was more than this,—what was he not—?”

One,—two months had passed since Marcus Sinclair had entered Islay Court,—received insults and curses again from his father, James Islay, and yet knew that he no longer hated.

“I can never hate again,”—he had said, when he returned,—“the demon’s pleasure of it, is buried.”

Buried for ever.

CONCLUSION.

‘ ABBEYSLEA ’ thought the Rector had made a great mistake. It thought it a very ‘ disastrous ’ pity, that so clever a man should throw himself away, upon a young, nothing-at-all-particular girl, like Miss Sinclair. ‘ Abbey’slea ’ could have told him of many other girls, who were far more suitable. Girls who had had experience in the kind of life, that a Rector’s wife ought to know about. Girls who had more dignity, more mind, more—religion, than this Miss Claire Sinclair had. Besides,—Mrs. Forrester had said that there was some mystery about the Sinclairs, and that a clergyman shouldn’t propose to a girl, who couldn’t be held up in every light to public vivisection. Indeed,—on consideration, would it not have been much wiser, in any case, to have first asked this Public, whom *they* thought the most suitable wife for him. There could have

been no mistake then. *They* would have chosen right.

Still,—‘Abbeyslea’ was magnanimous; it would forgive. It was only for his,—the Rector’s—good, that it was anxious. He had made a mistake,—it was sorry,—very sorry for him; but,—when he was married,—it would call upon his wife. It would be magnanimous;—it would forgive.

Abbeyslea could afford to be magnanimous,—now. For, Mrs. Forrester,—Abbeyslea’s monitor,—was leaving. She was going to London, to look after and improve the society there. She was going to collect around her that select circle of friends, that she would have sought after long before now, if it hadn’t been her *duty* to remain in Abbeyslea, in order to raise the tone of the society. But,—if *that* Reverend Liddon were going to remain Rector of Abbeyslea, and if he were going to marry *that* Miss Sinclair, and if people were not going to show him the cold shoulder,—*then*, she should leave. *She* wouldn’t pass over, what *they* were going to pass over. It wouldn’t become her dignity,

or—her morals. Therefore,—she would leave. It was her *duty* to leave. She *always* did her duty; and, it was a great pity that everyone didn't do theirs. The world and society would be well regulated, then; that is to say, if they followed out her rendering of the word "Duty."—

Marcus Sinclair did not live alone, when Claire left him, to become the wife of the Reverend Liddon.

"If I can't live with Ambrose, let me come and live with you, Sinclair," Franz Humbert said; and, nothing loath, Marcus Sinclair agreed to the proposition.

The violinist was as keenly, passionately fond of music as he used to be; but, the power of sound was no longer his god, reigning over and swamping everything.

"Let's go and see what we can do for Ambrose," he would say, sometimes in the very middle of his compositions,—“he works too hard,—he never thinks of himself. Come, Sinclair,—let's go and work too.”

But, Sinclair could not always come. He had his own work to do,—his own place to fill. Still,—there were spare hours, when he, too, would be found down in the heart of the city, labouring not for gain or profit, but for the sake of relieving and raising those sunken men and women, whom he found around him.

“We’re quite a little community, aren’t we, Ambrose?”—Claire would say, with the happiest, brightest smile upon her face,—“I wonder what you would feel like, if you had to go back to the days, when you worked alone?”

Claire was very fond of asking this question.

She liked to hear the answer he gave to it.

THE END.



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